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HAPPY 70TH EAGLE & DAN DARE

COMIC SCENE

Your Complete Guide to Comics

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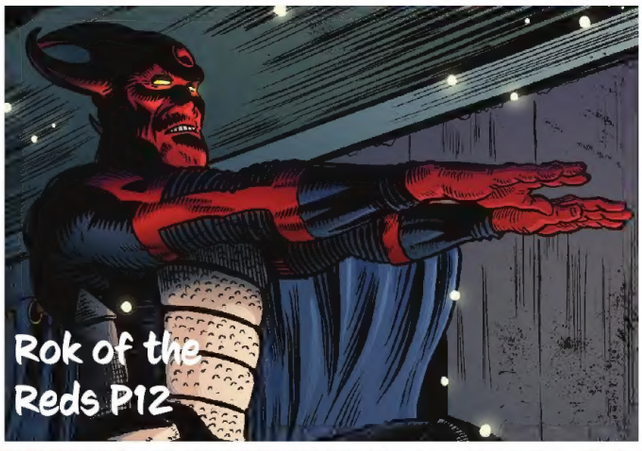
COMICSCENE - THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO COMICS

DAN DARE
PILOT OF THE FUTURE
Welcome to our celebration of 70 years of Dan Dare and Eagle. I hope you get excited about this issue as kids did in the 1950's for the original Eagle and in the revamped 80's Eagle. Check out comicscene.org for all the latest news



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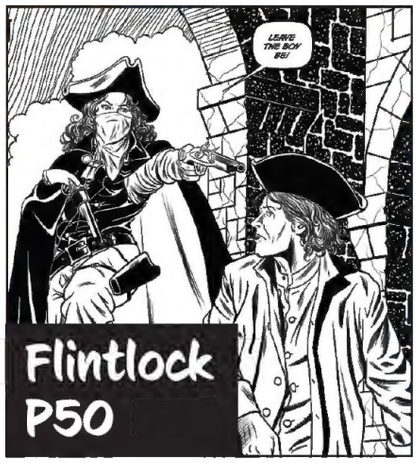

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WHERE EAGLES DARE

By Chris Hallam

It has now been seventy years since The Eagle first appeared: April 1950 marked its arrival, a date almost exactly mid-way through the 20th century. Other comics lasted longer: The Eagle's flight lasted a solid 19 years. But no British comic has ever been held in such high regard: even today, its cover featuring a distinctive bird emblem against a red square background (modelled on the top of a large brass inkwell, owned by Rev. Marcus Morris) seems to suggest quality. Little wonder that when a series of awards were established to honour excellence in British comics in the late 1970s, the name 'Eagle Awards' and indeed, the same logo was chosen.

Back in 1950, everything about The Eagle suggested its readers were in for a rare treat. Today, the covers remain difficult to reproduce but they were clearly colourful and of a high quality. It is easy to imagine the impact they must have had on a generation of schoolboys raised on war and austerity-era paper shortages. The design of The Eagle influenced the look of everything from the final issue of Dez Skinn's Warrior in 1985 to the modern day title, Phoenix.

In truth, brilliant though it was, the cover story, Dan Dare – Pilot of the Future has tended to overshadow The Eagle's other output. It was not, after all, even a science fiction-themed comic otherwise. Luck of the Legion, for example, told the story of Sergeant "Tough" Luck, a French Foreign Legion officer.

Western fans – and there were many of those in 1950 – also enjoyed Jeff Arnold's adventures in Riders of the Range. The Adventures of PC49 also soon found an appreciative audience being adapted directly from a popular radio series, itself inspired by a 1949 film starring Hugh Latimer as PC Archibald Berkeley-Willoughby. The title was well chosen it is hard to imagine a story entitled, 'The Adventures of PC Archibald Berkeley-Willoughby' would have caught on in the same way.

Humour came in the form of inept monocled super-sleuth Harris Tweed: Extra Special Agent, and his assistant "Boy," the creation of cartoonist John Ryan. Ryan's earlier strip, Captain Pugwash had been dropped early on, being deemed too young for the regular Eagle audience. Today, most people don't even associate the pirate captain with The Eagle at all. But thanks to its later long running TV series, it remains by far the biggest success of Ryan's career and technically the most famous story in The Eagle (other than possibly, Dan Dare himself).

Tommy Walls was slightly different. Empowered by the magical "W" hand signal created with his thumbs and fingers, Tommy was a boy whose thirst for adventure was matched only by his love for Walls' ice cream. The strip was, of course, an advertorial, a vital way for the comic to meet The Eagle substantial production costs. Today, Tommy's 'W for Walls' signal bears a close resemblance to the sarcastic 'whatever!' gesture, popularised by the 1995 film, Clueless.

The Eagle had other ways of raising funds too with its publishers, Holton Press embarking on a Disney-inspired merchandising campaign the like of which had never been seen in the UK before. Readers - or more likely, their parents were encouraged to buy everything from a Dan Dare 'military' hairbrush, to slippers, Spaceship Builder Kits, football boots, stamp albums, pencils, stationary, all geared towards promoting the comic's most famous space hero. Merchandise was soon available for Jeff Arnold or Harris Tweed fans too. Also, spin-off titles started to appear. Younger readers could enjoy Robin (1953-69) or Swift (1954-63). Girls could read Girl (1951-64).

The merchandising might seem surprising as The Eagle had deeply religious origins. Vicar Marcus Morris had in the 1940s, produced the widely read but financially insolvent, Anvil, a similar publication to the then popular Lilliput. Recruiting another talented Second World War veteran, Frank Hampson, Morris spied a gap in the market, launching a title which would appeal to deprived post-war male youth while hopefully combatting the threat Morris felt was presented by the so-called "horror" comics coming from the US.

The first Eagle was a spectacular success and sold 900,000 copies. Eagle would settle down to three quarters of a million sales a week - with an estimated two and a quarter million people reading it.

Some have detected a somewhat hectoring tone in some of the editorials, however. "There are really only two kinds of people in the world," Morris wrote. "One kind are the MUGS…the people who do something for others rather than just grabbing for themselves all the time…The opposite of the MUGS are the Spivs – also called wide boys, smart guys, hooligans, louts or racketeers." Readers were encouraged to be nominated as "Mug of the Month". Such ideas have not aged well, partly because the meaning of the word "mug" has changed in the ensuing years. There was actually relatively little overtly religious content either in the comic's famously detailed cut away pictures or in its historical biographies (although there was some).

The Eagle ultimately breathed its last in April 1969, a few months before Neil Armstrong walked on the Moon. It would be easy to claim that the exploits of Dan Dare and chums could not compete with the real life space age now unfolding on TV. But in truth, the end of The Eagle was not really to do with that.

Behind the scenes, the comic had declining throughout most of the 1960s. Marcus Morris had long gone, going onto help found the UK version of Cosmopolitan magazine, amongst other things while an overworked Frank Hampson had also quit. The comic faced numerous internal problems in the 1960s was displaying signs of the decline in quality and the frequent reprints which often accompany a comic in its death throes. The Eagle ultimately merged into Lion, a comic, itself conceived in the hope of repeating The Eagle's success.

It was not quite the end , of course. Between 1982 and 1994, the new Eagle made a decent attempt at repeating the original comic's success. But, in essence, the glorious flight of The Eagle was over.

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DAN DARE

By Chris Hallam

Second rock from the sun

In 1950, comic readers were introduced to a new kind of hero. Dan Dare: Pilot of the Future was the cover star of the brand new Eagle comic. A colonel in the Interplanet Space Fleet in the then futuristic 1990s, Dare, aided and abetted by his comical Wigan-born batman, Digby, was soon leading the third manned mission to Venus. As with the real-life Korea (Britain would join the Korean War in June 1950), Dare discovered a planet bitterly divided between north and south. The generally benevolent brown skinned Therons dominated the planet's southern hemisphere while the crueller and more science-obsessed reptilian Treens ruled the roost in the north. The Treen empire was soon revealed to be in thrall to the malevolent Mekon, a physically enfeebled figure whose body was dominated by his giant green bulbous head. A third race, the blue Atlanteans also lived on Venus, just north of the flame-belt which (in Dan Dare's universe anyway) circled the planet's equator.

We are told that the Mekon is the 'supreme scientist,' himself the product of Treen technology. In reality, he is probably one of the greatest creations of British science fiction history in comics or anywhere else. He, Dan Dare, Digby, their colleagues Sir Hubert Guest and Professor Jocelyn Peabody all came from the pen of a young talented Second World War veteran, Frank Hampson. Hampson had first been recruited to work for Eagle founder, Rev Marcus Morris's previous title, parish magazine, The Anvil. The new character also had religious origins. He was originally going to be called Chaplain Dan Dare having been developed from an earlier story about a tough inner city preacher called Lex Christian.

Best of British

The new story was an instant hit. Today, his early adventures seem like an odd mixture of the future and the past as if the Battle of Britain were being waged in the year 2070. In Dare's world, man has already conquered the Moon and Mars and is well on its way to Venus. In reality, no one had even sent a dog into space in 1950 and we are some way off manned missions to Mars and Venus even today. Despite this, the first Dare story is a classic case of a vision of the future being forged by the concerns of the time. As with the creation of the Triffids in John Wyndham's 1951 book, the Venus mission in Dan Dare is prompted by concerns over food shortages. Food rationing was still a reality in 1950, just as it was for Winston Smith in George Orwell's 1984 (1949). And Dan Dare's Britain clearly enjoys an ascendancy in the space race which has never existed in reality.

The quality of the strips was striking, however, maintained in part, by luxuries such as scale models in The Eagle offices to help artists with scale and scientific advice from such luminaries as Arthur C. Clarke. As Dan continued his adventures in The Red Moon Mystery and Reign of the Robots, he became subject to a merchandising boom and serialisation on Radio Luxembourg.

It couldn't last forever and by the end of the 1950s, an overworked Hampson had left the comic. The quality of the strip suffered – at one point in 1962, leaving the front page entirely to appear inside black and white. Dare's promotion to Command of Space Fleet marked the end of new episodes of the story in 1967. The Eagle itself came to an end in 1969.

Dare to look to the future?

This was not quite the end for Dan Dare though. Returning in a number of different guises, the character has made his mark on almost every decade since.

In 1977, for the second time in just over a quarter century, Dan Dare was central to a major British comic launch with a more violent brutal Dare revived after two centuries of suspended animation to head the line-up for 2000AD. 2000AD, in truth, although good, owed more to the sort of 'horror comics', The Eagle had been created to oppose than it did to the original Eagle itself. The launch was a success though: 2000AD is still going strong, 43 years later, surviving more twice as long as The Eagle itself managed. Despite this, while certainly not a bad strip, readers never took to the new Dan Dare. Always overshadowed by 2000AD's star, Judge Dredd, he failed to survive even until the end of the 1970s.

In 1982, Dare got another chance when The Eagle itself was revived. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the new comic never quite captured the magic of the original, but it was certainly a decent attempt, lasting until Christmas 1993, by which time most British comics were in trouble anyway. The new Dare was a youthful Flash Gordon-like figure, a descendent of the original space hero, battling a revived Mekon several centuries later. The opening story was written by Pat Mills and John Wagner, ironically, two of the creators of Judge Dredd.

The 1980s saw the deaths of Frank Hampson and Marcus Morris. The decade also witnessed a number of good natured spoofs of the original strip. Private Eye ran Dan Dire: Pilot of the Future? a satire on Labour leader Neil Kinnock's seemingly hopeless battle against the Magoon (Margaret Thatcher) while TV's Spitting Image mocked George HW Bush's gaffe-prone Veep in Dan Quayle: Pillock of the Future. Clearly, Grant Morrison's malevolent Thatcher-like Prime Minister in Revolver was not the only person to use the Dan Dare name for political reasons. Best of all, though less political, was Oink! comic's Ham Dare: Pig of the Future. With high quality scripts and Hampson-esque artwork from Lew Stringer and the late Malcolm Douglas, the story was much better than its unpromising porcine punning title suggests.

Meanwhile, back at The Eagle, a noble attempt was made to revive the original Dan Dare character in his 1950s form in 1989. It could not save the new Eagle. Otherwise, with a few notable exceptions, such as Grant Morrison's searing attack on Thatcherism in the 1990s Revolver version and a 2002 animated series, little has been seen of Dare since.

Once the Pilot of the Future, Dan Dare has now become a legendary figure of British comics past.

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THE TACHYON WARHEAD EXPLODES!

DAN DARE IN 2000AD

2000
DARE
PROGRAMME 7
DATELINE 09 APR 77
IN ORBIT EVERY MONDAY
THE BIOGS FROM PLANET ZIRCON ARE ON THE RAMPAGE FOR THEIR MAIN FUEL SUPPLY ...EARTHMEN!

Can a 'Pilot of the Future' find true peace and happiness anywhere other than the most revered boys comic of the 1950's? If ever a character seemed out of time it was Dan Dare in 1977, yet for many the move worked.

This is the bit where we get to talk about the elephant in the room. The unmentionable. The black sheep of the family, forever the unruly offspring whom visiting relatives never see amounting to anything. Let us talk then of a man out of his time, shunned not only by purists of earlier (and later) days but by the very people responsible for bringing him into being. Yes, let's address 2000AD's Dan Dare.

Dare had been the peg on which the title's early 1977 launch was hung. The previous year IPC staffer Kelvin Gosnell had read about the upcoming vogue for all things sci-fi and felt the company were about to miss the boat. Pat Mills, fresh from rejuvenating UK boys comics through IPC's 'Battle' and 'Action' agreed with him, and it was Mills who was tasked by management to nurture the new weekly sci-fi title into being. Armed with a long gestation period (and learning lessons from the banned 'Action') Mills added his growing interest in European art into the mix, setting the highest standards both for himself and the creators. This was one launch that would demand every strip be a winner, no filler, with perceived 'weaker' storylines held back. Assembling the line-up he'd quickly discerned a missing ingredient - "It needed a space hero, and…in a moment of possible insanity, I suggested Dan Dare."

Launched in 1950, the 'Eagle' (the 'new national strip cartoon weekly') had captured the zeitgeist, delighting a generation of comic readers in a post-war country that,

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despite trifling matters like continued food rationing, looked to the future with renewed optimism. A huge readership, newly-protected 'from cradle to grave' by the fledgling NHS, marvelled at the weekly exploits of Commander Dan Dare of the Interplanetary Space Fleet, the imaginative storylines with exquisite artwork by creator Frank Hampson and others (all reproduced on quality colour rotogravure paper stock) setting new standards for UK comics. In an era in which television's Professor Bernard Quatermass of the 'British Experimental Rocket Group' fought off alien contagion and visitors gasped at the 'Skylon' at the Festival Of Britain, Dan Dare's exploits offered further confirmation to a nations youth of their place at the forefront of technological advancement, an adult world awash with space exploration, hover-cars and personal jet packs.

Yet even during the Eagle's 1950's heyday the mirage began to dissipate. It was the USA and USSR who would jostle for victory in a 'space race' in which Britain barely made the starting line-up. A visiting Hungarian football team had the audacity to batter the 'invincible' English 6-3 and inflict their first ever defeat on home soil. In conflict with Egypt over ownership of the Suez Canal, Britain eventually lost to, of all people, the Egyptians. Such humblings on the world stage gave a dose of realism to a cosy British Establishment, shook further by the cultural events of the following decade as the Beatles lead the vanguard of what became known as a 'counter-culture', revolutionising music, art, fashion and personal politics. By the 1970's the world became unrecognisable from the one ten or fifteen years previous, the rapid changes only intensifying through home-grown terrorism in Northern Ireland, turmoil in the Middle East and the Sex Pistols declaring Punk Rock open by swearing on teatime TV. The sureties of the past had gone; perhaps because just like the British Experimental Rocket Group they'd never been real in the first place.

2000AD's new anti-heroes came with a sneer that suggested their sympathies lay with the gangs of punks continually being moved on by police in Chelsea's Kings Road, and the resurrected Dan Dare proved no exception. Writer Ken Armstrong was originally assigned the task of crafting a 'NASA-style' storyline centring on the planet Jupiter, but Mills later dumped the template, writing his own draft alongside Gosnell whilst building on some aspects of Armstrong's script. A variety of try-out artists failed to live up to expectations before (despite retaining reservations about the look of the main character himself) Mills assigned Italian artist Massimo Belardinelli the task of bringing Dan Dare back to life. The shift from 'pilot of the future' to 'space hyper-hero' was sold to a new generation of readers by way of explanation (by alien editor Tharg) in the opening two-page 'Welcome To Your Future' preview in that very first issue or programme (Prog). Dare, a 'hero from the dawn of space exploration', had suffered terrible injuries attempting to save the first Orbital Power Station from an explosion. Unable to rebuild his shattered body, surgeons placed him into suspended animation until the 21st Century, when technology was such that he could be brought back to life with a new body, new face. Yes, Dan Dare was back, and clearly not the man he was.

Drokk it! Even the axes are alive!

Awarded the coveted colour centre page spread, Belardinelli's opening visuals immediately packed a punch, with the reader hurled straight to 2177AD as the ageing space-freighter "Sirius', in the throes of being ripped apart over Jupiter, is sucked down to the surface by a mysterious force emanating from the planet's giant red spot. Commander Dan Dare, now resembling a scowling bass player in your local punk

band, is the sole survivor, and back at headquarters the blame for the disaster is pinned on him. Placed on court martial, Dare wastes no time in displaying the necessary anti-authoritarian attitude of the times ('Drokk it! I'm going back') and stows away onboard the cruiser 'Odyssey', determined to find out what caused the death of his crewmen.

This was heady stuff in a decade where enraptured television viewers lapped up images from 'Voyager,' NASA's space exploration mission, beaming back stunning close-up images of the Solar System's distant planets for the first time, and mega-giant Jupiter, with its swirling, mysterious red spot, indeed fired the young imaginations of a generation. If gaining instant derision from older fans of the Eagle, the new Dan Dare, all 'punk' haircut and up close and personal with Jupiter, seemed as much of his times as his older self.

Months of preparation had paid off. From the beginning the new title forged a unique, self-confident identity, as from foundations laid down by Mills, the likes of Gosnell, art assistant Kevin O'Neil and an array of top talent provided an irresistible mix of invading foreign armies, bloodthirsty futuristic sports and 'space-age dinosaurs'. If the blood count in that first issue seemed run of the mill for boys comics of the time, the assassination of Margaret Thatcher by an invading foreign army certainly wasn't, nor the ever-frequent phrases of 'Drokk It!', 'Borag Thungg!', or 'Dirty Volgs!'. Even a strip such as 'M.A.C.H.1,' a blatant 'Six Million Dollar Man' rip-off, seemed to hit the mark, becoming an early pacesetter in the popularity stakes before 'Judge Dredd', far-future lawman in an incredibly violent Mega-City One, came up fast on the rails after a second issue debut.

Dan Dare took to his new surroundings instantly ('Cowardly scum! Fight a man like a man…hand to hand') joining Odyssey's Commander Monday, an imposing fifth-generation Martian with white hair and pink eyes, in exploring the surface of Jupiter. Transcending the cheap printing process of UK comics of the time, Belardinelli imbues the mysterious planet with a nightmare otherworldliness, '…where the buildings are alive! Grown from living tissue…a sight so alien it's beyond our human understanding'. The alien Biogs (giant alien parasites based on microscopic biological life) were excellent too; the sight of helpless crewmen converted into energy by the mother Biog, feeding from a pool of victims before her, just one of many unforgettable Belardinelli images.

In a title overflowing with great storylines and groundbreaking full or three-quarter page layouts, Dare's debut more than held its own, providing a real high point with the shocking self-sacrifice of Commander Monday, immortalised on a brilliant Brian Bolland cover ('Follow me into the Sun…you will share the death of a Martian warrior'). Yet the script had undergone many revisions, and high-octane thrills such as whole moons being hurtled at the Earth Space Fleet saw the strip stand apart somewhat from the shared sensibility of the likes of Dredd, 'Invasion' or 'Flesh'.

'I say we kill him, two heads are better than three.'

Belardinelli remained for what was simply labelled at the time 'Saga 2', writer Steve Moore providing the storyline that saw the return of arch-nemesis the Mekon. A wondrous Mike Western cover for Prog 12 ('I am Mekon…the Supreme Being') welcomed the little green guy to the title in style, and even for those unfamiliar with the Eagle's legacy this all seemed like a Big Deal. A stunning double-page opening vista sees Dare arriving in the London of 2177, now nothing

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‘A self-contained storyline ‘Dan Dare and the Curse of Mytax’ led the way in the inaugural 2000AD Annual’

more than a huge intergalactic tourist trap with an array of visiting aliens, a scene so imaginative it practically demanded centre stage of the giant fold out Dan Dare Poster Magazine released that summer.

The Mekon’s return brings the tension up a notch and there’s a real frisson to any panel the two protagonists share, even if northern Venus’ evil dictator didn’t immediately recognise his accursed enemy after the face job. Moore’s supporting characters are great fun too; Rok, wolf-man pilot on a star-freighter, wielded a laser-sword in a time just prior to the phrase ‘light-sabre’ entering common currency, and the Two of Verath, originally two separate, evil criminals (one clever, one barbaric) surgically joined together in eternal hatred for one another, made for some fun dialogue. Moore’s wry script provides real moments of dark humour; after a crewman is caught in a light speed jump, ageing ten years every few seconds before collapsing into a dry pile of bones, the observation is made that the ship will need to be run on a skeleton crew. Belardinelli’s art remains top-notch throughout and is even seen to evolve towards the end of the storyline; later scenes set on the planet Congress with Chairman Lo-Ham seeing the evolution of a style similar to later strips such as ‘Meltdown Man.’

A self-contained storyline ‘Dan Dare and the Curse of Mytax’ led the way in the inaugural 2000AD Annual, encapsulating perfectly this period of the strip and Belardinelli’s particular brand of magic. Yet the near future was being mapped out in the Annual’s early preparation for the Christmas 1977 market; if Dare is awarded the ten-page colour lead strip, it’s Judge Dredd who appears twice. In truth Dan Dare, if not unpopular, was proving a middling hit at best. A rethink seemed on the cards, with the strip taking a short sabbatical after Prog 23, and upon its return in Prog 28 things were distinctly different.

‘You test great Bear by fighting him? Is funny!’

With new writer/artist team Gerry Finley-Day and Dave Gibbons on board, the strip morphs into a

WOULD THAT I COULD TELL MY LOYAL TREENS OF MY MASTER-PLAN! NAY, SHOUT IT TO THE WHOLE COSMOS!
...THAT THE BRAVE AND NOBLE DAN DARE...
IS ABOUT TO SAVE THE LIFE OF THE MEKON!
NEXT: THE CRYSTAL OF LIFE!

militaristic long-haul space opera. Finley-Day's script, influenced by the phenomenal success of Star Wars, sees Dare enlisted to lead a mission into the dreaded 'Lost Worlds' region of the Galaxy. Insisting on picking his own crew, the veteran spacer heads straight for Topsoil, a notorious hangout for outlaws and outcasts, where he immediately singles out man-mountain Bear, kicked out of the Russian Space Service for brutality. Hitman is next on his list, a quick-fire with his gun frozen into the flesh of his hand. Both, along with ace pilot Polanski and others, are goaded into meeting Dare at the space port's departure gate the next day, where the unveiling of what is to be their ship (a gigantic weapon of mass destruction labelled the 'Space Fort') and a promise of fun, adventure and 'fantastic pay, if you live long enough to spend it' proves more than enough to get the unruly bunch of vagabonds to sign up. By the end of the first six page instalment all the major players are in place and by the end of the next, Dare and his crew have blown their first entire planet out of existence.

Writing a 2015 introduction to the Rebellion collected editions, writer Gareth Ennis declared himself a huge fan of this era, admitting it probably accumulated one of the highest body counts in the history of the title. It's true; this version of Dan Dare is indeed a 'different beast' in a 'harsher world', yet there's now also the indelible impression of a strip desperately looking to somehow fit in. Regardless, the space operatics suddenly seem off-kilter in a comic where the likes of Mills' epic Dredd storyline 'The Cursed Earth' gathered in intensity week by week, and many 2000AD staffers of the time harboured huge downers on the strip, with Kevin O'Neill on record as detesting it. For him and others, Dan Dare belonged firmly in the past, representing the very public school sensibility 2000AD sought to crush. With Dredd's growing popularity claiming the colour centre pages, O'Neill's first move as Art Director was to reverse a decision made by Gosnell to give the cover over to the first page of the Dare strip, a move that had briefly added an 'old school' flavour to the title.

You didn't need a public school education to appreciate Dave Gibbons' exquisite artwork. The glue that held the whole strip together, Gibbons was busy honing the clear, precise, dynamic style that would become so well known. Brief fill-in issues from the likes of Garry Leech and Trevor Goring seemed fine enough, yet it felt right that Gibbons was on hand for the eight-page cliffhanger ending to 'the Doomsday Machine', sending the strip off into temporary hiatus on a high. With the title about to merge with 'Starlord', Dare was cast adrift in space, unconscious on the wreck of an Eagle spacecraft, the final panel asking the pertinent question 'Is this the end for Dan Dare?'

The comic now entered a four or five year period many regard as its high point, with Dredd immediately embarking on another epic storyline in 'The Day The Law Died' and the opening chapter of a 'Flesh' sequel as depicted by Belardinelli. The title inherited two outstanding strips from the Starlord merger too; the savvy robotic shenanigans of Mills' 'Ro-Busters' and the adventures of mutant bounty hunter Johnny Alpha in 'Strontium Dog' rendered by Carlos Ezquerra. With the real upturn in quality and competition, Tharg was quick to offer reassurance that 'both Dan Dare and Robo-Hunter will return'.

'Would that I could tell my loyal Treens of my masterplan. Nay, shout it to the whole Cosmos!'

Both were back for the February 1979 celebratory Prog 100, yet it's the returning Dare strip that truly rises to the occasion. With veteran comics scribe Tom Tully joining the ever-stellar Gibbons, the first eight page

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instalment of 'Servant of Evil' hit all the right notes, as our titular hero, still adrift in space, falls straight into the clutches of a dying, frail Mekon. Weak and desperate, the little green guy quickly reminds everyone of his bad-boy credentials, vaporising a hapless Treen lackey who'd dared show a hint of admiration for our barely-alive hero. Wishing to inflict yet more torture on his mortal enemy, the Mekon ordered Dare be attached to a 'memora-thon', doomed to relive his most fearsome memories. Managing to tear himself free leaves Dare with acute memory loss, unable to recognise his sworn enemy or even remember his own name. A glorious final full-page colour denouement only leaves the reader craving more.

The following weeks cover ('I must obey...' the Mekon) as given over to a storyline that now promised much, yet what followed in the months to come would, for some, slowly begin to grate. As an unsuspecting Dare unwittingly began assisting his enemy in the search for the life-affirming Crystal of Life, even the strips staunchest supporter would admit the storyline felt more out of place than ever. There's nothing necessarily wrong with Tully's script per se, it's just compared to the high-octane work surrounding it (John Wagner, Mike McMahon and Bolland all on fire with Dredd, Mills and O'Neil thrilling readers (and upsetting management) on 'Ro'Busters' Ezquerra producing a career High on Johnny Alpha's Journey into Hell') it merely meanders, more old-school thrill than 'thrill-powered overload'. More than ever Dan Dare seemed adrift in time.

Rooting for this particular underdog would have been a thankless task if not for the art of Dave Gibbons, later admitting to becoming increasingly frustrated with the 'pot boiler' nature of the script himself, there's never any sign of this in his work, whether he's bringing to life the likes of the Crystals' home planet Lystria, the ferocious Hagnat, warlord ruler of the invading Thraxans, or Dare laying dramatic claim to Eternicus, the Cosmic Claw. Once again the art held everything together, work that, along with every other strip in the book, would look even better following a temporary switch to better quality paper stock with Prog 110. The strip would benefit from the change and continue looking glorious for the short time left of its 2000AD career.

Dredd and Dare were the only two characters to survive a mini-relaunch in Prog 112, yet the instant popularity of dynamic new strips such as 'ABC Warriors' only highlighted the disparity of writing styles on display. Unpopular with many readers, Dan Dare was now hanging by a thread, the strip emitting its own sense of finality especially once a fully-rejuvenated Mekon made his escape, last seen, quite literally, heading out the door. A return to Topsoil and the introduction of Morag, newly arrived from home world Stygia and intent on avenging the death of her husband (armed with her own prehistoric pet) did add some late impetus, and as she joined fellow outcasts Dare and Sondar at the end of Prog 126 and sailed off in search of the Mekon there was clearly unfinished business to attend to. With that weeks announcement of the forthcoming merger with short-lived weekly 'Tornado,' Tharg decreed that Dan and Sondar would be 'taking a break for a while.'

The Mighty One was telling an almighty fib. A whopper, some might argue. There never was any real impetus to continue with the strip, as forces from both within and outside the industry conspired against a possible return. The prospect of a Dan Dare TV series, if still in the early stages of planning, seemed to be fast becoming reality, utilising groundbreaking comic-style visuals and with actor James Fox mooted for the lead role. Making use of 2000AD talents such as Brian Bolland for drawing up visual guides and press packs was one

The Mighty One was telling an almighty fib. A whopper, some might argue

thing, but the project only ever envisioned utilising the original Frank Hampson version of the character. Tully, harbouring big plans for his new character Morag, was understandably miffed with the sudden halt to proceedings, yet by that point wild horses wouldn't have kept Gibbons away from eagerly taking up new work at Marvel UK and an upcoming Doctor Who Weekly. There was brief talk of a possible return for the 2000AD version, travelling back in time to that fateful orbital power station and dying in the process of rescuing his older self, yet apart from singular cameo appearances in anniversary editions it wasn't to be. Letters arriving at the Nerve Centre enquiring of the storylines return received short shrift and continued to do so for years to come. If plans for the television series would eventually crash and burn, talk of reviving the Eagle title were well underway by 1981, utilising its own particular take on the character so central to the originals success. Whichever way the future might have unfolded, 2000AD's Dan Dare would need to be swept under the carpet. The title would soar to even greater success without him anyway, continuing long into a golden age and forming a central pillar of the UK industry, published to this day.

To the victors, the spoils. It's the winners who write the history books. Many years later...an almost indiscernible adjustment gets made to that infamous non-ending of the saga in the collected works, as Tharg's original phrase '...for a while' is replaced by the simple word 'indefinitely'. See, there were never any fib's told all along, right kids?

2000AD's Dan Dare could never quite manage to live up to the star billing thrust upon his shoulders, destined instead to retain something of an underdog status. For a few diehards however the story of Dan Dare 1977-1979 was really quite something.

Actually...Drokk it! It was great.

Author: Peter Gouldson | **Twitter:** @gouldp7070
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IT IS MERELY AN IMPACT MARK FROM MY STEERING WHEEL. NO FURTHER EXAMINATION IS REQUIRED. DO YOU UNDERSTAND, DOCTOR?
ROK of the REDS
PART FOUR
ALIEN SUPER-BEING ROK OF ARKADY-- HAVING TAKEN THE FORM OF BAD BOY FOOTBALLER KYLE DIXON--ENSURES THE CLUB DOCTOR DOES NOT DISCOVER HIS TRUE IDENTITY...
NO FURTHER EXAMINATION...
JUST A BRUISE. THE DISCOLOURATION MAY BE PERMANENT, BUT OTHERWISE NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT. THIS ONE'S FIT AS A BUTCHER'S DOG.
THAT'S A SURPRISE CONSIDERING THE AMOUNT OF ALCOHOL HE CONSUMES. I TRUST THAT'S ALL BEHIND US TOO?
ABSOLUTELY, MR McCANN, SIR!
DON'T LAY IT ON TOO THICK, DIXON.
FOOTBALL... A STRANGE AND INCONSEQUENTIAL PURSUIT-- SUPPOSEDLY INTELLIGENT CREATURES SQUANDERING THEIR LIVES CHASING AN INFLATED ORB.
STILL, I SHOULD NOT COMPLAIN. THE DEMANDS OF A FOOTBALLER'S LIFE LEAVE ME AMPLE TIME TO CONTINUE WITH MY WORK. THAT IS THE IMPORTANT THING--THE WEIGHTY BUSINESS UPON WHICH THE FATE OF WORLDS DEPENDS.

MR McCANN'S PUTTING ME ON THE WING WHILE YOU'RE SUSPENDED. I, uh, WONDERED IF YOU COULD GIVE ME ANY ADVICE?
ADVICE... CERTAINLY.
STOP WASTING TIME ON SUCH POINTLESS ACTIVITIES. FIND SOMETHING WORTHWHILE.
I WOULD SUGGEST PARTICLE PHYSICS. IT IS A FASCINATING FIELD OF STUDY AND YOU MAY LEARN MUCH TO ASSIST IN ELEVATING YOUR SPECIES FROM THEIR PRIMITIVE STATE.
Huh?
YOU HEAR HIM? HE JUST TOLD AIDEY MYERS TO QUIT!
YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED, DIXON. STILL THE BIG I AM--NOBODY CAN PLAY FOOTBALL BUT YOU!
VAPPPP
I COMMEND YOUR ACCURACY, ANDREWS. IT WOULD GREATLY BENEFIT THE TEAM IF YOU WOULD DISPLAY IT MORE OFTEN IN FRONT OF GOAL.
YOU LITTLE TOERAG--!
NOBODY CAN STAND YOU, DIXON! NOBODY WANTS YOU HERE! WHY DON'T YOU JUST PUSH OFF!
YOU CAN BOTH PUSH OFF! YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE TRAINING! GET TO IT! AND THIS ENDS HERE!
MAYBE HE HAS CHANGED. COOL AS A CUCUMBER THERE. THE OLD KYLE WOULD HAVE GONE MENTAL.

SPLIT UP! EIGHT A SIDE!
PHEEEEEEE
WAKE UP, KYLE!
SPEED THAT UP, ROBBIE! KNOW WHO'S OPEN BEFORE YOU TAKE THE BALL.
HERE GOES TWINKLETOES!
TWINKLE MUST'VE LEFT HIS TOES AT HOME TODAY!

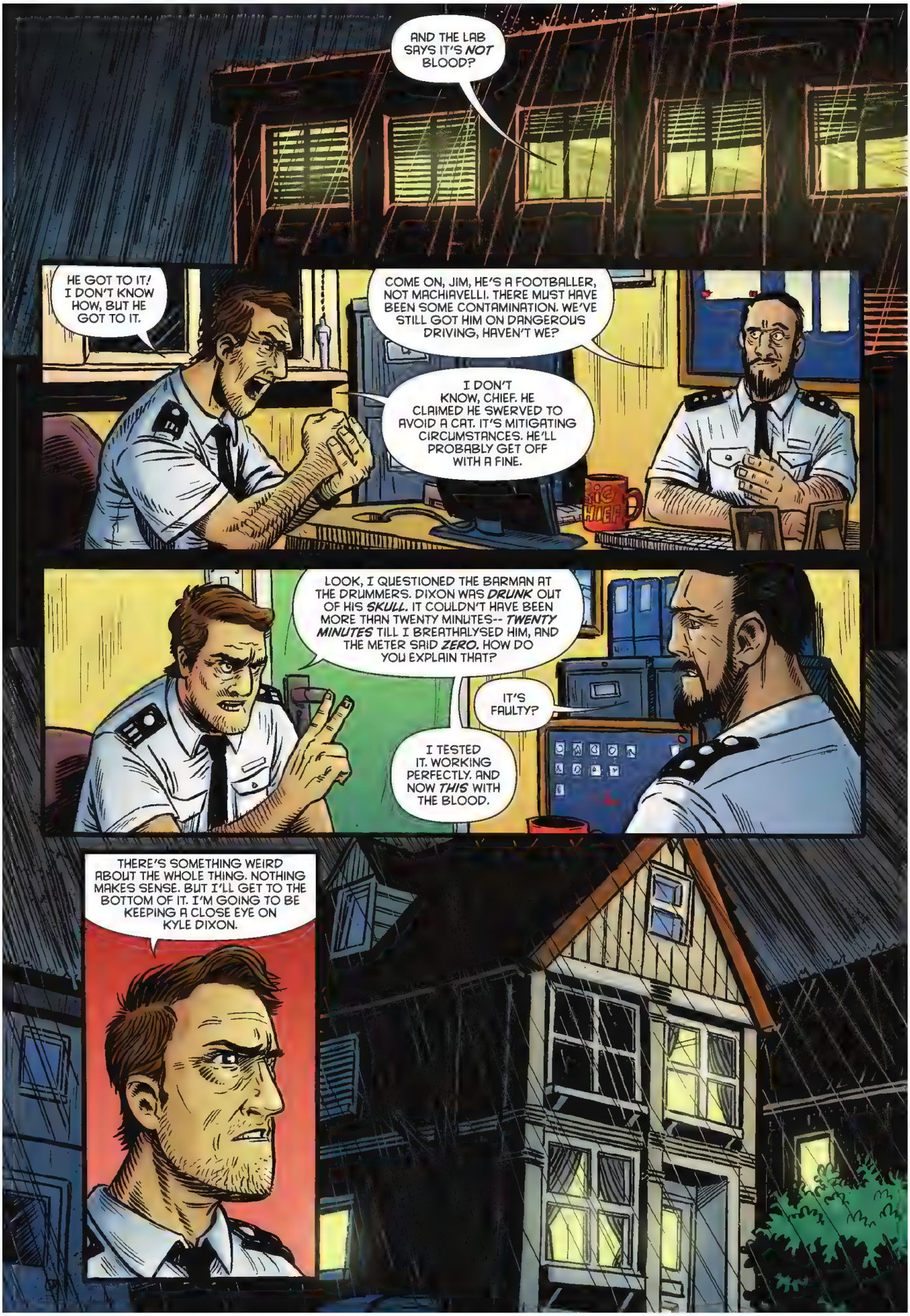
SUFFERIN' DUCK! MY GRANNY COULD HAVE SCORED THAT, DIXON!
YOU SURE YOU'RE ALL RIGHT, KYLE? YOU'RE PLAYING LIKE YOU'VE NEVER KICKED A BALL BEFORE.
I ASSUMED IT WOULD BE SIMPLICITY. I AM RATIONALISING TOO MUCH. THIS IS A GAME OF REACTION--OF INSTINCT--LIKE A GALACTIAN DANCE.
I MUST STIFLE MY OWN WILL, ALLOW THE FLUENCY I ABSORBED FROM KYLE TO TAKE COMMAND...
BETTER!
GREAT TACKLE, KYLE!

FEEL THE FLOW OF THE GAME--FEEL THE BALL AT YOUR FEET, THE SLIGHT GIVE OF THE GRASS, THE HOT BREATH OF A DEFENDER COMING UP FAST.
WAIT FOR IT--
NOW! CUT ACROSS!
STEADY. ON YOUR TOES. DRAW HIM IN--DRAW HIM--
AND YOU'RE FREE!
LOOK AROUND. THE MEREST GLANCE. JEZ ANDREWS SPEEDING UP THROUGH THE MIDDLE.

BEAUTIFUL PASS!
WONDERS WILL NEVER BLOODY CEASE.
CUT HIM SOME SLACK, JEZ. THE LAD'S TRYING. AND BY HECK, YOU'VE GOT TO ADMIT HE'S A BIT GOOD WHEN HE DOES.
GOOD SESSION, SON. KEEP IT UP.
POLICE CALLED. YOU CAN PICK UP YOUR CAR.
RIGHT, BOSS.
BENNO, TREATMENT ROOM. LET THE PHYSIO HAVE A LOOK AT THAT LEG.
YES, A POINTLESS PASTIME, AND YET... SOMETHING STRANGELY PLEASING ABOUT IT. DIFFICULT NOT TO FEEL A CERTAIN SENSE OF... EXHILARATION.
NO DOUBT IT WILL PASS.
GIVE IT HERE.

ESCAPE
JONES.
JIM, IT'S ANTHEA AT THE LAB. THIS SAMPLE YOU SENT OVER-- KYLE DIXON?
GOT THE RESULT? GREAT.
RADFORD POLICE STATION
POLICE
WELL, NO. THERE'S A PROBLEM. ARE YOU SURE THIS WAS TAKEN FROM DIXON?
I WAS THERE MYSELF. COCKY LITTLE TOERAG.
AND NOBODY TAMPERED WITH IT?
IT WAS SEALED, WASN'T IT? WE SENT IT STRAIGHT OVER. COULDN'T HAVE BEEN TAMPERED WITH.
THE THING IS, IT'S NOT BLOOD.
WHAT?
I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT IS, BUT IT'S NOT BLOOD. LIKE NO BLOOD I'VE EVER SEEN ANYWAY.
MORE LIKE PLASTIC.

KYLE! YAAY!
HEY, KYLE, WANT TO GO TO THE PARK AND HAVE A KICKABOUT?
PERHAPS ANOTHER TIME, JAKE. I AM TIRED NOW.
DINNER'S AT SIX, KYLE.
THANK YOU KINDLY, MRS PLUNKETT, BUT I HAVE YET TO REGAIN MY APPETITE.
PLEASE, CALL ME RUBY.
KYLE SAYS WE CAN GO TO THE PARK SOME TIME AND HAVE A KICKABOUT!
45
SEE! I TOLD YOU! IT *IS* HIM!
CAN I CARRY YOUR BAG, KYLE?
JAKE'S BESOTTED WITH HIM.
I'M NOT SURE KYLE DIXON IS THE BEST ROLE MODEL.
*THE **MORPHOSIS** HAS STRAINED ME MIGHTILY. TWICE TODAY I FELT IT SLIPPING. IT WOULD BE PERILOUS TO REVEAL MY TRUE IDENTITY TO THESE CREATURES.*
STILL, AT LAST, ALONE. I CAN RETURN TO MY TASK.
CLICK


AND THE LAB SAYS IT'S *NOT* BLOOD?
HE GOT TO IT! I DON'T KNOW HOW, BUT HE GOT TO IT.
COME ON, JIM, HE'S A FOOTBALLER, NOT MACHIAVELLI. THERE MUST HAVE BEEN SOME CONTAMINATION. WE'VE STILL GOT HIM ON DANGEROUS DRIVING, HAVEN'T WE?
I DON'T KNOW, CHIEF. HE CLAIMED HE SWERVED TO AVOID A CAT. IT'S MITIGATING CIRCUMSTANCES. HE'LL PROBABLY GET OFF WITH A FINE.
LOOK, I QUESTIONED THE BARMAN AT THE DRUMMERS. DIXON WAS *DRUNK* OUT OF HIS *SKULL*. IT COULDN'T HAVE BEEN MORE THAN TWENTY MINUTES-- *TWENTY MINUTES* TILL I BREATHALYSED HIM, AND THE METER SAID *ZERO*. HOW DO YOU EXPLAIN THAT?
IT'S FAULTY?
I TESTED IT. WORKING PERFECTLY. AND NOW *THIS* WITH THE BLOOD.
THERE'S SOMETHING WEIRD ABOUT THE WHOLE THING. NOTHING MAKES SENSE. BUT I'LL GET TO THE BOTTOM OF IT. I'M GOING TO BE KEEPING A CLOSE EYE ON KYLE DIXON.

THE NOTES START LOW, BENEATH THE RANGE OF HUMAN HEARING-- A SLOW, EERIE, ALIEN DIRGE. THEN RISING, SWIRLING LIKE LEAVES ON THE WIND--
A SONG, BUT MORE THAN A SONG. EACH NOTE PRECISELY CALCULATED, BARBED LIKE AN ARROW, REPLETE WITH MEANING.
ACCUSATION AND PROOF. A SONG TO CHANGE WORLDS, TO BRING DOWN DYNASTIES.
WHEN IT IS COMPLETE ITS LOGIC WILL BE IRREFUTABLE--AND THE ARKADII ARE, ABOVE ALL, CREATURES OF LOGIC.
IS YOUR NEW LODGER NOT JOINING US?
HE DOESN'T SEEM TO EAT MUCH AT ALL. I'M A LITTLE WORRIED ABOUT HIM, TO BE HONEST.
WE WENT OUT WITH A FOOTBALLER ONCE, DIDN'T WE, VIOLET?
NO WE DIDN'T. YOU'RE FANTASISING AGAIN, DOREEN.
FUNNY NOISE COMING FROM KYLE'S ROOM. LIKE... HE'S IN PAIN. MAYBE HE'S HURT HIMSELF.
I SHOULDN'T BUT... WHAT IF SOMETHING'S HAPPENED TO HIM? MUM WOULDN'T MIND THEN...

MORE NEXT ISSUE!

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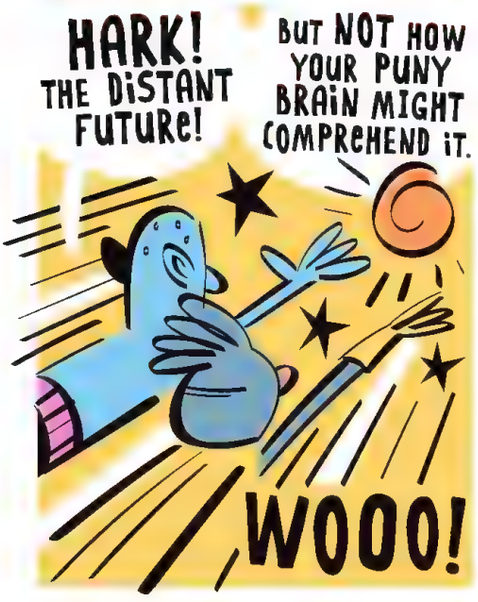
WHACKOMAN!

BY MARC JACKSON

OUR HERO HAS MET THE MYSTERIOUS 'DR LA FONQUE' INSIDE SHEILA THE STEALER'S PURSE. WITH THE PROMISE OF A WILD ADVENTURE, HE TAKES HIS HAND AND ENTERS THE UNKNOWN...

I HAVE TO SAY, THIS IS FAR-OUT EVEN FOR MY STANDARDS YOU BIG, BLUE, RASCAL! WHERE PRAY-TELL ARE WE GOING?
REFRAIN FROM QUESTIONS, COSTUMED SIMPLETON! ALL WILL BE REVEALED!



THAT'S A HEARTY TRIO OF TIME RIGHT THERE! WE GO WAY BACK, BUT I'M HAPPY TO LET BUGSY TAKE ONE FOR THE TEAM!
WHAT'S THE PLAN, DOC?
WE TELEPORT INTO HIS SECRET LAIR AND CATCH HIM OFF GUARD! TWO AGAINST ONE!

*ALL THE WAY BACK IN EPISODE 7!

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DARE THE FUTURE

The Time Grant Morrison & Rian Hughes Did A Number on Dan

It was 1990 and Brit comics were on a roll, Deadline and Tank Girl were two years in. Crisis, the grown-up version of 2000 AD, had just hit its 50th issue, and all seemed perfectly timed for Fleetway to launch another monthly for all those new grown-up and even more mature readers that were waiting in the wings, just looking to read comics.

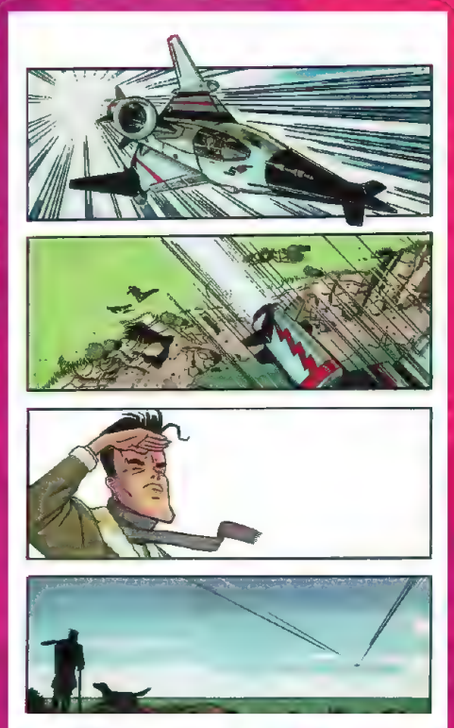
That new monthly comic was Revolver and emblazoned across the front cover, screaming for us all to 'Dare the future', was the somewhat very different version of Dan Dare.

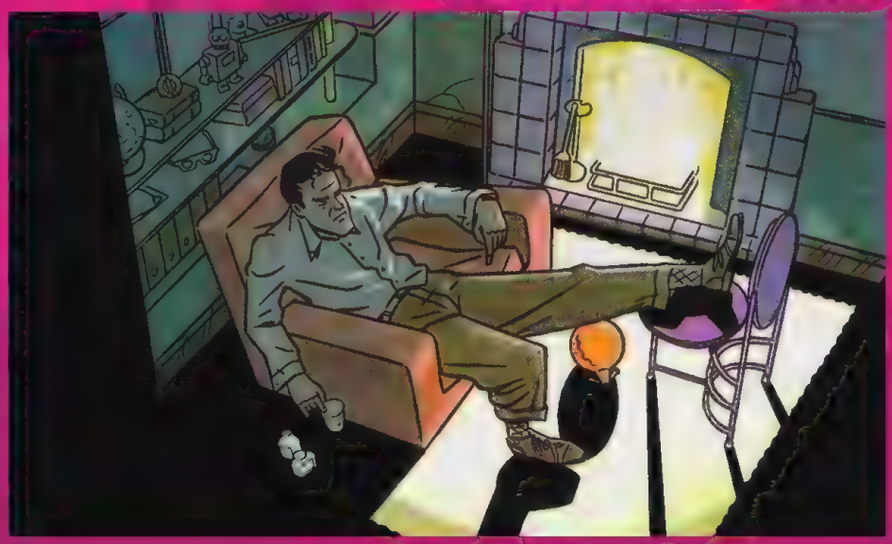
Dare by Grant Morrison and Rian Hughes debuted in Revolver issue 1 alongside the other headline strips; Milligan & McCarthy's Rogan Gosh, Purple Days (a Hendrix bio-fantasy) by the writer and music journo Charles Shaar Murray. There was a massive promotional push for the comic, with Fleetway really getting behind it as the future of comics, and the new Dan Dare was a huge part of that, really making the headlines. Fleetway obviously thought Revolver was going to be huge, tapping into the new market, exploiting the success of Vertigo's Dark Knight and the aforementioned Deadline, selling to the sort of trendy 90s adults who'd get The Face, that sort of thing.

It didn't. It failed rather spectacularly, losing a pile of cash in less than a couple of months, cancelling upcoming titles and folding out the same year it launched in that blaze of glory.

And Dare was perhaps worst served by it all, cut off before it's concluding episode, ending in Revolver issue 7 with the cliffhanger of the Mekon's return. It wasn't until Crisis 56, a couple of months later, that we got the conclusion, although it only merited a sidebar mention on the cover... all in all, a rather sad and inglorious end to what looked set to be well.

But Grant Morrison and Rian Hughes' Dare, although flawed, still serves as a great piece of speculative fiction, the tale of a 50s icon who discovers that he's grown old and living in the future is not the idyllic utopian experience his adventures always promised.





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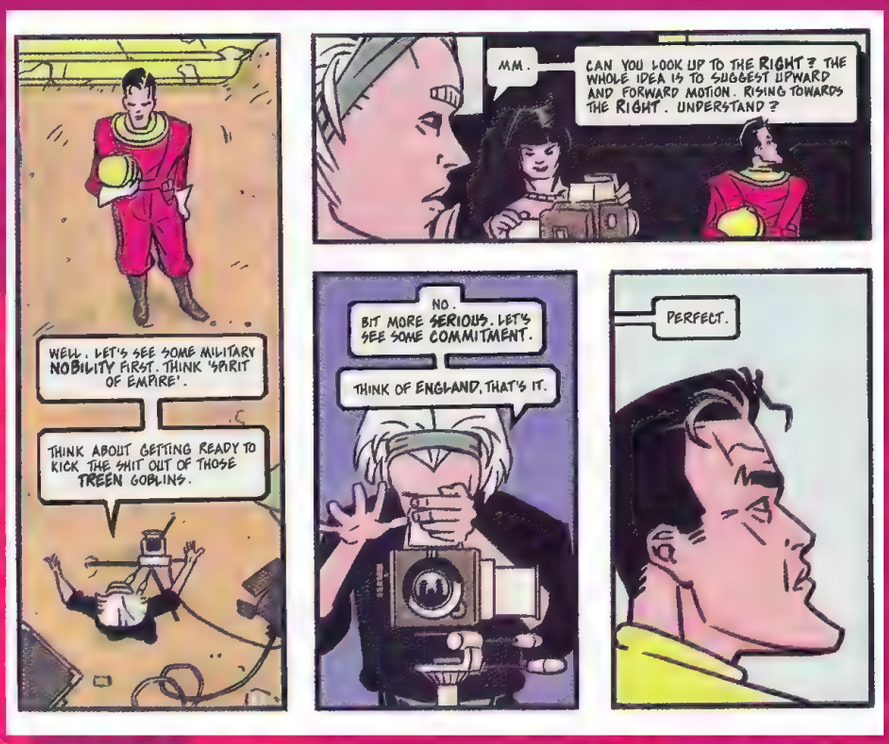
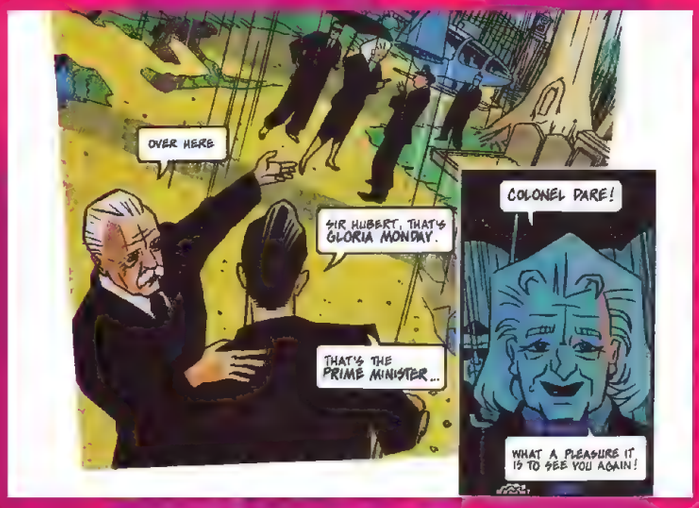
A huge part of what makes it worth your time and attention has to be Rian Hughes' artwork, a burst of retro-futurism that takes Morrison's story and elevates it to something special. Other artists might have taken the storyline and produced something as unrelentingly dark as Morrison's plot and Dan's future. But Hughes did so much better, taking the shining positivity of the 50s Dare and projecting forward, a thing of both beauty and nightmare, encapsulating the ideas of a country and a man who'd seen better days, their future amongst the stars brought down to earth.

It's some of Hughes' finest work, paying homage to one of his heroes, Serge Clerc, in the clear line style, re-mixing it, fusing those clean lines with angular imagery, cutting-edge designs, and sumptuous art-deco stylings. But it's not a retro thing, this is something that doesn't need to revel


WELL. LET'S SEE SOME MILITARY NOBILITY FIRST. THINK 'SPIRIT OF EMPIRE'.
THINK ABOUT GETTING READY TO KICK THE SHIT OUT OF THOSE TREEN GOBLINS.
MM.
CAN YOU LOOK UP TO THE RIGHT? THE WHOLE IDEA IS TO SUGGEST UPWARD AND FORWARD MOTION. RISING TOWARDS THE RIGHT. UNDERSTAND?
NO. BIT MORE SERIOUS. LET'S SEE SOME COMMITMENT.
THINK OF ENGLAND, THAT'S IT.
PERFECT.



the 50s, just reference it, imagine a world where the imagery and design strengths of that period continued into the now. Whether it's the iconic looks of the spacecraft, the modernist deco feel to the buildings, or something as mundane as the beautiful design of the CDat player in Dan's room. There's something of wonder and beauty on every page. It's genuinely a thing of great beauty, with Hughes' design never interfering with some quite breathtakingly good visual storytelling.

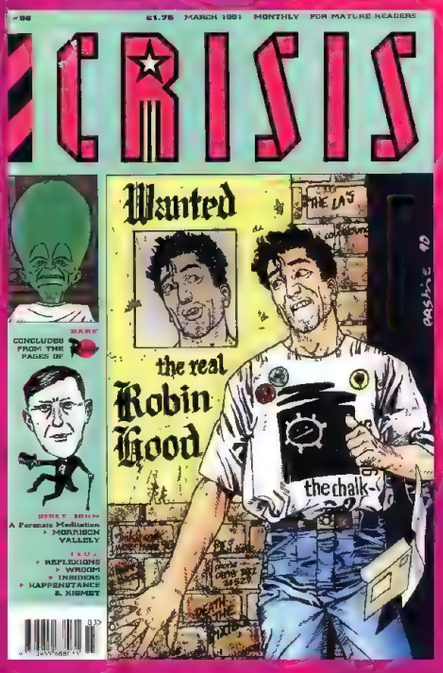
Most importantly of all, there was no attempt on Hughes' part to try and emulate the great Frank Hampson, something others have tried and failed to do through the years. Instead, he took what made Hampson's vision of the future so magnificent, the amazing futuristic designs with that 50s touch and re-imagined through the lens of his own vision and design.

It's a beautiful comic to look at, perhaps the high point of Hughes' comics work, but it's a case of glorious artwork serving a flawed story. Morrison's storyline divided fans at the time of Dare's release, many fans of the character fearing, quite rightly in many ways, that this was Morrison playing around in the toy-box of Brit comics and doing the whole grim and gritty thing, taking the shining light of 50s sci-fi and soiling him.

This is very much to the template of deconstructionist darkness we'd seen much of through the 80s and 90s, beginning with Alan Moore taking apart Marvelman. The difference here, of course, is that Marvelman, Kid Dynamo, Big Ben, whereas Dan Dare was still very much known and loved.

In truth, there's nothing particularly for Dan to do here, he's a witness spectator for the lion's share of the book. Right up until the climactic finale he hobbles around feeling ineffectual, out of touch, because that's exactly what he is. Add to that the somewhat broad (possibly even ridiculous) stereotypes Morrison throws around and it's hardly a thing of subtleties, from his Thatcher-esque Gloria Monday,

No-one saw me. I wasn't there.
I can't even remember if I had a reflection in the train window
DARE TO LOOK TO THE
The real Dan Dare was the one on the posters the one with perfect skin and clean clothes. The one who was always sure of himself and proud of his country.
Everywhere I went he was there, staring down at me, the school bully with his smug self-confidence
UNITY



though the clichés of authority and the military, through to the down-trodden Northerners, culminating in Digby's [illegible] missing a whippet to tick all the boxes.

You can even accuse Morrison of going soft town on the grim and gritty, that sort of giggling teenager thing of tearing down [illegible] needless final humiliation of Dare at the hands (and probes) of the Mekon.

Yes, he takes it too far, his strokes are too broad, his politics worn firmly on his sleeve, the final humiliation is just trashy exploitation. But there's still a lot to enjoy in Dare, this defiantly anti-Thatcherite screed of a future gone very wrong, a dystopian Britain where the North is a no-go area, a third world country within the country and Dan Dare is a throwback to a bygone age. It's this element of it that retains the power in Dare, long after publication, not the broad strokes of desperation for power, not in the relatively [illegible], but the portrayal of Dan, his dreams of the future a faded memory, overtaken by the [illegible] reality of present day. That's where the real powerful effect of Dare still comes through.

So what we get is Colonel Dan Dare, retired hero of the spaceways, directionless, tired, disillusioned, scraping by on a meagre pension and seemingly powerless to effect change in the world he no longer recognizes as good old Blighty. Morrison isn't content with that though, most brutally through his old matey, Digby... 'You killed children. Children'.

But Britain's not done with its old hero yet, he's still a well-known name, recognized, a [illegible] political capital in all this, which is why Dan is brought back by the government, led by the Thatcher-esque Gloria Monday of the authoritarian Unity Party.

Dan himself might be washed-out, but there's mileage in brand Dare still, painting the picture of strength, patriotism, and pride for political gain. [illegible] he's a pitiful figure, complicit in spreading

the world for the Unity Party. And in doing so, he's wrapped up in a plot to seize power at any cost, bringing him back in contact with both Jocelyn Peabody and Digby, once faithful Eagleman turned Northern terrorist/freedom fighter.

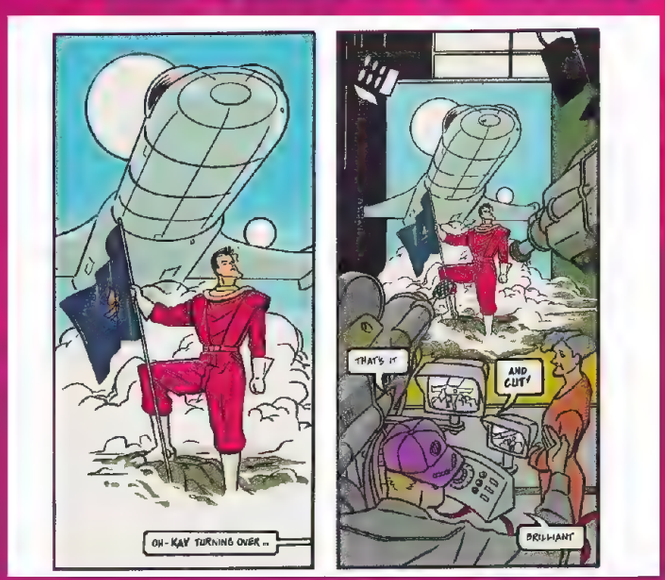
However, the Unity Party's desire for power is far beyond anything anyone can imagine, leading them to their very own deal with the devil, as the Mekon steps in with a nefarious plan to own the Earth's food crops with the highly addictive, aphrodisiac and controlling food substitute Manna. Dierra Monday and her cronies sacrifice the population for power, the Mekon's mutated Manna children will be under his control... can good old Dan Dare step in to save the day? Of course he can, but as can be expected from Morrison's grim and gritty tale, it's a pyrrhic victory at best.

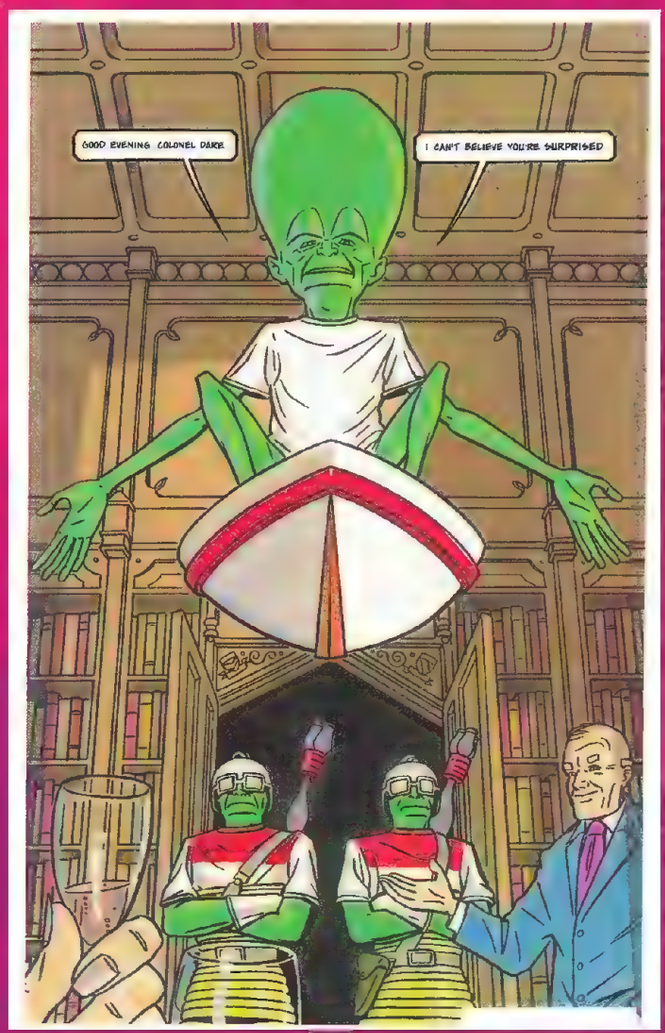
Strangely enough, coming back as Dare in 2020 Britain, cold, unwelcoming, xenophobic Brexit Britain, where the divide between rich and poor is ever widening, where despots in power will seemingly do anything to hold onto it, it all strikes a rather unwelcome chord. Dare is Dan as a symbol of what Britain used to be, or perhaps more accurately, what Britain thought it used to be. His stench for optimism, journeying in the stars, saving the Universe with an ever-present face as he does, has always belonging

impeccably always the good guy. Queen and country, stiff upper lip and all that. But then it all went wrong, the ideas soured, the dream went wrong, and now all Dare is good for is as a symbol of what the politicians of today want the masses to imagine the country can be... and yet, it's very apposite right now here in post-Brexit Britain, that idea of a country looking backwards to an imagined glorious age. Sorry how things work out really.

In the end, Morrison and Hughes' Dare, with all its political murmurings and obsessions with power, all as does all the deconstructionist stuff, it's still a good book with elements of

'AND THE UNITY PARTY SENDS US IN THE TASK FORCE. RIGHT BEFORE THE HAM ELECTION
'THAT TRIGGERS THE TREEN RIOTS BACK ON EARTH.. CAN STILL REMEMBER THE LOOK ON SOLOMAR'S FACE .. TORN APART BY BOTH SIDES.
'WHY DID WE DO IT ?'
WHAT MADE US THINK WE COULD POSSIBLY BE RIGHT?
CHILDREN..THEY WERE ONLY CHILDREN !





Author: Richard Bruton | **Twitter:** @richardbruton

DAN DARE

A HERO FOR ALL TIMES

It's been 70 years since Dan Dare first lifted off. Drawn, and initially written, by Frank Hampson, Space Fleet's finest pilot has soared across multiple skies since then. Accompanied by genius Professor Jocelyn Peabody, intrepid sidekick Digby and a variety of other friends, Dan faced the Mekon, an evil alien dictator who had subjugated his entire race.

While Dan's stories are action packed adventure fiction, he was also at the forefront not just of the resurgence in UK science fiction, but the cultural wave of renewal that swept across the country after World War II. While rationing would be lifted four years into his life, there was a tangible air of excitement and optimism to Space Fleet's expansion out into the stars from the very start. This was a bright future, if not an entirely safe one, and Hampson's legendary attention to detail was a big part of that optimism. The country, exhausted and in shock, had to be shown something different and better. They needed space, to breathe, recover and aspire to. Dan Dare provided just that.

In the seven decades since his launch in the Eagle, Dare has been the star of video games, a cartoon and multiple near misses on the big and small screen alike. Most recently, Sam Worthington was cast as the character in 2010 but, over a decade later, a movie has yet to appear. However, there are two areas where Dan Dare has continued to flourish; comics and radio.

Appropriately, Dan's modern comics renaissance began in 2000AD, Eagle's spiritual successor. Written by Pat Mills (Nemesis the Warlock), Steve Moore (Doctor Who) and Gerry Finley-Day (Rogue Trooper) and with art by Massimo Belardinelli (Sláine) and Dave Gibbons (Watchmen). This run catapulted Dan two hundred years into the future where the Mekon was still a threat. Dan, like all characters is very much a product of his time and this punk-rock-esque space opera infused take was a major, but not a shift from the jovial 'Biggles in Space' of the original series.

That shift was even more drastic when he returned again in 1990. Dare, written by Grant Morrison and with art by Rian Hughes was a high watermark for Western comics at the time. Published in Revolver, it was very much a satire of the Thatcher era and embodied the best and worst of satirical fiction. The series is impressive, grimly funny at times, cynical, cold and revolves around a moment of horrific personal trauma for Dan that plays as tawdry and exploitational now. There isn't a page that isn't gorgeous to look at, but the book has aged badly and is not currently in print. It is interesting to note though that it casts Dan as a figure adrift in a morality-free world, the authority figure of the original series replaced by a man out of time in every sense of the word.

17 years later Garth Ennis and Gary Erskine would take a shot at the character as part of Virgin's short-lived comics line. A direct sequel to the original strips, set several years later, it played with the same themes as the Morrison/Hughes series albeit in far warmer tones. Here Dan is a King Arthur figure, a man who has retired and returns to find a world that has found peace at great cost. Called back to service, he, Digby and Peabody find themselves in the middle of a final, apocalyptic war with the Mekon that challenges his every principle. Melancholy where the Morrison/Hughes series is furious, it's an impressive piece of work and one that updates Dan without losing sight of him.

The same can also be said of the two most recent takes on the character. Spaceship Away! Was a magazine launched in October 2003 as a vehicle for 1950s-style stories. It's proved successful and continues to publish three times a year with the support of the Dan Dare Corporation. More recently, Peter Milligan and Alberto Foche's excellent 'He Who Dares' continues Dan's evolution as a contemporary hero. The story balances some lovely pulp tropes (The Mekon uses a mind control device to be elected World President) with some surprisingly clear-eyed looks at Dan's biases and a genuinely complex, nuanced and chilling final sequence. It's still clearly Dan Dare, but like all good stories, it's also very much, and necessarily so, of its time. Dan, as Milligan described him, is a fundamentally 'decent bloke' and in this era of fake news and faker leaders, we need more of them than ever.

Dan's radio adventures have been no less storied. Originally played by Noel Johnson, who played Dick Barton too in 1951, Dan's original radio adventures were sponsored by Horlicks and ran five years. Almost none of the serial survives, although recently one episode did come to light and is highlighted at John Freeman's excellent comics and genre media news site, DowntheTubes.

From there, Dan appeared in a Spanish adaptation under the frankly spectacular name Diego Valor in 1954. He then made his BBC debut in 1990 played by Mick Ford in a four-part adaptation of one of Hampson's original stories 'Voyage to Venus'.

Both these versions of the character were welcome and harked back to the original. But it was in 2016, when B7 Media released their first season of six stories inspired by the original comic strips, that Dan Dare's audio adventures began to match the wit and subtlety of his contemporary comic adventures.

Starring Ed Stoppard as Dan, Geoff McGivern as Digby, Heida Reed as Professor Peabody and Raad Rawl as the Mekon, the series adapts original stories, but does so with a refreshingly modern eye. Series producer and director Andrew Mark Sewell described the time period Dare was created in and the challenges inherent in it for modern audiences: "When Dan Dare was first conceived by Frank Hampson and the Rev. Marcus Morris it was at a time of post war austerity, when the victory over the Nazis was tempered by continued rationing, fear of imminent nuclear Armageddon and the decline of the British Empire. The nation was in need of new kind of hero that embraced a bold, more optimistic future.

In 1950s Britain Dan Dare served that need – a bright ray of hope and optimism, enthusiastically looking towards a brave new world beyond the stars. Dare was also a fiercely moralistic, honourable and heroic; all great attributes to entice your audience in an uncertain world. In many ways, amidst the global turmoil that now besets us we could do with a heroic figure to help us feel more positive and hopeful about the future."

Script editor and writer Colin Brake explores that idea further: "... The challenge was to keep the core values and features whilst bringing it up to date. We spent a long time considering the way other stories had been rebooted and updated - projects like Battlestar Galactica for example, and decided not to make the stories too dark in an effort to modernize it...we tried to build in both contemporary knowledge of space exploration and the fact that space travel is increasingly being seen as something that is done by commercial operators rather than organizations like NASA and ESA. Having said that, we also wanted to keep faith with the spirit of the original stories, which is what all our episodes were based (sometimes loosely!) on original Dan Dare comic adventures."

B7 Media have a talent for the exact sort of SF Dan Dare requires, having previously adapted The Martian Chronicles, I, Robot and Blake's 7 and released a history of (and possible future for) crewed space travel in the excellent Audible Originals, Space Race. Like Morrison, Ennis and Milligan in print, their scriptwriters have been able to build on what went before them but build in exciting new directions. Lead writers Richard Kurti and Bev Doyle in particular helped set the tone for this with the first script for the series. They talked to me a little about the challenges they faced in the development process: "The challenge was to NOT hear the 'parody' stiff upper lip voice, but to take all the characters seriously as living, breathing people with backstories and agendas. The writers needed to take the characters seriously, even though the characters themselves are not downbeat and serious. Parody = death!"

This is the same key to success as Milligan and Ennis used in their scripts. Instead of holding Dare up as an anachronism, all three groups of writers find a way to make his old-fashioned approach relevant and interesting today. In B7's case this is helped immensely by the strong voice cast which in turn help flesh out Digby, the Mekon and Peabody into much more than just a stereotype. Raad Rawl explains: "The Mekon is the embodiment of all our fears. The arch bogeyman who will take away our freedom and life and make us bend to his will. History is full of such characters, even today certain dictators or would-be dictators fit that bill. My challenge was to make his want of total power real for me and be prepared to throw a tantrum if I didn't get my way."

Which sounds nothing like any world leader we could name at this juncture does it?

That ability to stay true to the core of the character and at the same time to the concerns of the day is central to Dan's

appeal and to how to update him successfully. As Colin Brake puts it: "The adventures that Dan and his friends have do exist in a slightly heightened state of reality, but by grounding the characters we were able to add a greater sense of realism. It was also important to flesh out Digby and Peabody and make them more three-dimensional than perhaps their comic strip counterparts had been. I like to think that our sensitive approach to modernizing Dan and his friends has enabled us to please both fans of the original Eagle comics and listeners who've come to Dan fresh. I only hope that we get to conclude our modern take on the saga of Dan Dare, with our planned third volume of adventures..."

At time of writing there are no current plans for more Dan Dare comics and B7 Media are crowdfunding on Indiegogo their concluding volume of Dan Dare audio dramas. Their version of Dan's world is recognizable both as ours and as something Hampson and co would recognize. A solar system crowded with life, a vast alien intellect intent on our destruction. Private concerns colliding with public safety and the only thing standing between us and interplanetary disaster is a small group of heroic astronauts. On the surface, Dan Dare's world doesn't seem optimistic but that's not a view the B7 team share. Jonathan Rhodes, who plays the villainous Mekon, said: "Dan Dare may be sci-fi fantasy, but it provides a measure of our earliest artistic reflections on space conflict and adventure. Something which surely brings us joy and a hint of nostalgia as we prepare for our next chapter of real-life space thrills."

Series producer, Helen Quigley, feels the same way and also notes the early progressive steps the original series made: "...whether it's 1950 or 2020, as a "pilot of the future" it's infinitely possible to update Dan Dare to reflect the time we live in. However, I was impressed that some aspects needed no updating. Professor Peabody's science and engineering credentials would have raised eyebrows in 1950, so putting her on an equal footing with the men in the team at that time was exceptionally progressive and is something that remains equally important now."

Perhaps most tellingly, Dan himself and his arch nemesis agree. Ed Stoppard, who plays Dan, said: "Well, I think coronavirus will get us if Donald Trump doesn't, so no. But in terms of the world of Dan Dare, it is certainly - yes, evil exists but there is a greater force trying to bring civilizations together and forge a peaceful future. If that isn't optimistic, what is?"

While Raad Rawi, who plays The Mekon, said this: "As long as we seek truth and justice and be prepared to speak truth to power, there is hope for the future of mankind. Artificial Intelligence will play an increasingly significant role in our development. So long as we control it and not let it dictate our way of life the future is bright. But beware of The Mekon!"

Words to live by. Happy 70th, Colonel Dare. Keep watching the skies.

You can BUY the complete collection of Dan Dare from: www.DanDareAudio.com

Author: Alasdair Stuart

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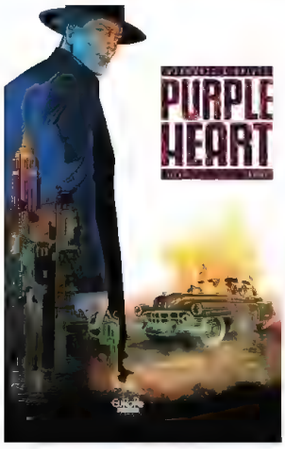

Title: Purple Heart Volume 1 Savior
Author: Warnauts & Raives
Script: Warnauts
Origin: Belgium
Publisher: Le Lombard / Europe Comics
Price: €7.49

Purple Heart is a crime thriller set in New York. It follows the story of Joshua, a hardened Second World War veteran who works as private investigator for a law firm he worked at before being deployed to Europe in action.

Co-creators Warnauts and Raives have collaborated on several works together before releasing Purple Heart. They have worked with some of the biggest continental publishers including Futuropolis, Casterman and Editions Du Miroir.

This first edition sees him investigate a case of blackmail with a local property developer. Joshua is assisted in the quest by his former army colleague, Winston. The two embark on a cross-city caper.

Joshua soon finds out that this criminal case is slightly different as it transpires the victim is having problems much closer to home than initially thought.

As we to and fro across New York there are run-ins with Nazi art thieves, love triangles and demanding mothers. If Joshua thought his post war life was going to be quiet he was sadly mistaken.

IT IS SOMETHING TO BE ABLE TO PAINT A PARTICULAR PICTURE, BUT IT IS FAR MORE GLORIOUS TO PAINT THE VERY ATMOSPHERE
TO AFFECT THE QUALITY OF THE DAY, THAT IS THE HIGHEST OF ARTS
EVERY MAN IS TASKED TO MAKE HIS LIFE, EVEN IN ITS DETAILS, WORTHY OF THE CONTEMPLATION OF HIS MOST ELEVATED HOUR

Title: Last of the Atlases
Author: Vehlmann, De Bonneval, Tanquerelle, Blanchard
Origin: France
Publisher: Europe Comics
Price: €2.49 per chapter

This is a really enjoyable thriller. We looked at the first installment last year and the next four have been released recently.

Our protagonist Ismael is now fully immersed in an international crime racket and we are treated to some flashbacks as to how he became embroiled in the criminal underworld in France.

Ismael is involved in a crime ring that has ties to Africa, France and India as he oversees the purchase of a huge robot, which he believes could save the earth from disaster.

Last of the Atlases is well drawn, fun and intriguing. It is a snip at €2.49 and well worth a look.

Title: Title: Thoreau and Me **Author:** Cédric Taling
Origin: France **Publisher:** SelfMadeHero **Price:** £14.99

Released on 5th Marth, Thoreau and Me is the debut graphic novel from French painter and illustrator Cédric Taling. Taling previously worked as a screenwriter for the French television station Canal+ ID.

Thoreau and Me is the story of Parisian artist Cédric's mid-life crisis. Following some extensive reading on the climate change crisis and consumerism, Cédric decides to make some life changing decisions.

His musings are played out against the backdrop of direct quotes from the nineteenth century philosopher and environmentalist Henry David Thoreau. Cédric discusses a wide range of issues with Thoreau's spirit throughout the book.

Taling's style is influenced by both North American comics and Japanese manga. Thoreau and Me is extremely colourful and he uses a variety of drawing techniques to compose this novel.

This graphic novel is a fun approach to tackling our economic and environmental attitudes to life using a mélange of humour and philosophy.

Author: Thomas Sargent | **Twitter:** @nouvellebobinons

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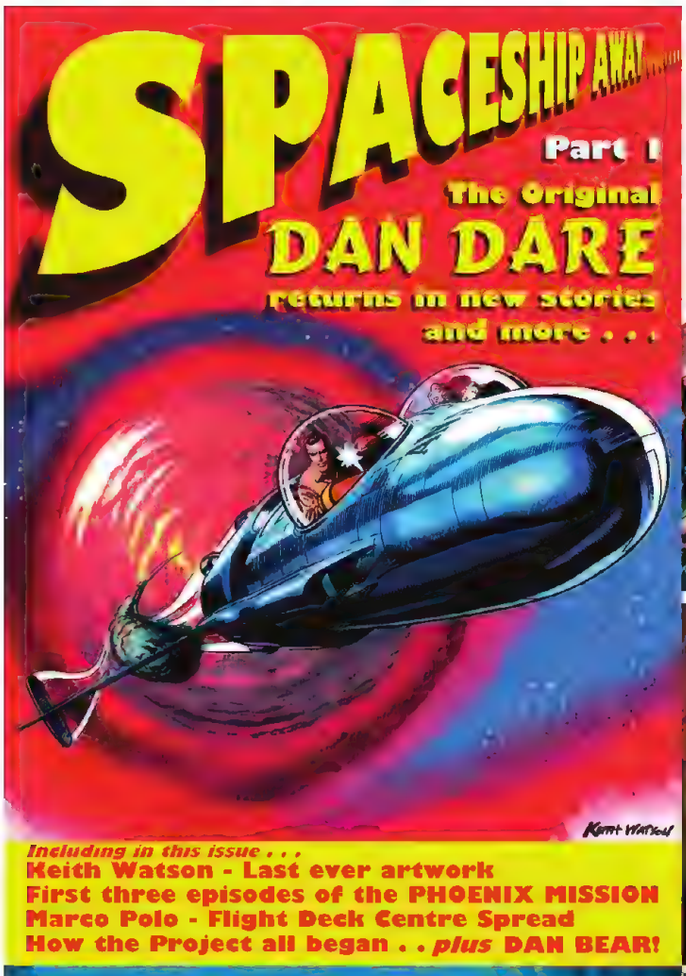

Including in this issue . . .
Keith Watson - Last ever artwork
First three episodes of the PHOENIX MISSION
Marco Polo - Flight Deck Centre Spread
How the Project all began . . *plus* DAN BEAR!

Reviving the ORIGINAL DAN DARE

By Rod Barzilay

MILLIONS OF MILES AWAY— IN COLONEL DARE'S OFFICE
COLONEL DARE REPORT TO THE CONTROLLER, PLEASE.
PILOT
Keith Watson's last ever artwork

I grew up with the innovative Eagle in the 1950's, and like many youngsters of that time became hooked on Dan Dare - we would save our copies and re-read them over and over again, captured by the fabulous artwork, and tasty stories that often ran for over a year!

But in 1959 Eagle was taken over by a rival company, and it's budget much reduced. It lost many good writers and artists, and ended up using Dan Dare reprints on cheap paper - which folded into the Lion comic, in black & white, at the end of the 1960's.

A number of attempts to revive Dan Dare have been made since, but most sort to "up-date" him and modify his character, (one attempt even gave us his great grandson!) this annoyed many of the old fans who just wanted the original one back, just as he was. Some even started commissioning original DD artists to do an art-board for them - and I joined the queue for one from Keith Watson.

When telling another fan (Dave Westaway) of this he made a comment that started a fire in me. He said as a number of fans were having artwork done - why not all link together and do a whole new story! A fantastic idea - I was all for it, and so was Keith Watson when I told him - he had one stipulation - that he had editorial control - he was always frustrated in his time on Dan Dare having to follow DD scripts that were not true to the original. Like me, he wanted it to be as close to the 1950's one as possible to be true to Frank Hampson's creation. Gosh we really were on the same wavelength!

In June 1991 I started talking to other fans - and they liked the idea - but we had no story - some fans offered spin-off yarns - but our hero wasn't in them! Christmas and the project was still stalled - so in the end to get things moving, I had a go at writing one myself - I wanted a big solid saga, but Keith said we wouldn't get enough fans to cover one that size - go for a small one - say Eagle annual size. But that was only eight pages - much too small - I ended up doing a ten episode one, with a cunning plan! The story "The Phoenix Mission" would be a complete one in itself, but could act as the opening chapter to the big "Green Nemesis" saga that I really wanted.

I placed my effort between "The Ship That Lived" tale and the "Phantom Fleet" yarn, as there was no date link between them. And I drew on some of the loose ends that FH had left us, plus slipping in as many links, people, places, and hardware already established in his Dan Dare world.

In April 1992, Keith and myself launched the idea at an Eagle Society weekend. The plan was for fans to pay for there own pages of artwork - and when the story was completed Keith would take all of it to Fleetway to show them what the original fans really wanted (the hope being they would pay for the use of the story - and the fans would not only end up with some great artwork to keep - but have their money back as well!) Then Keith talked about how he proposed to do it - visuals of

Continued on page 37.

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page itself. The project was well and truly on it's way - but like all good things - it was to good to last.

Of course seeing what an artist does with ones script, brings with it a mixed bag of feelings. Keith's view of Dan Dare more or less reflected my own - but he did make a change to my writing on that first page - the last frame - he thought as we were launching the original DD again, that Dan should feature in a large and eye catching way - so my scribbles of a light hearted exchange between Dan and Digby - which I was rather pleased with - was replaced by a large head of Dan. I was a little disappointed, however, we did end up with a great study of our hero.

But what did really knock us for six, was a discovery Keith made soon after finishing the page, that he had cancer. Doctors operated, only to find that the disease had gone too far and it was too late to do much - he fell into deep depression, cut himself off from everyone, never drew again, and died the following year.

After the funeral - I was invited back to his wife's house - on the table was Keith's last ever artwork, the first page of The Phoenix Mission. Knowing how much the project had meant to Keith as well as myself, and so not to disappoint the fans, I made a promise to Beverly, his wife - that I would somehow get all the artwork finished, and the story published so his fans could see it.

Now we had to recruit another ex-member of the Dan Dare team to do so, and with the aid of Alan Vince we did - Don Harley. (This was interesting - for it turned out Don had been present when Keith and I launched the project, and knowing the tremendous amount of work it would entail, thought to himself - thank goodness I'm not doing that!)

"I MADE A PROMISE TO BEVERLY, HIS WIFE - THAT I WOULD SOMEHOW GET ALL THE ARTWORK FINISHED, AND THE STORY PUBLISHED SO HIS FANS COULD SEE IT"

new spacecraft - roughs of the individual pages - which could perhaps include it's sponsor as a background character - also the two page episodes would be done just like an old Eagle, with the Red Box and all. WOW fans lapped it up - half the art boards were pre-sold that very week-end!

However, Keith had other commitments, and couldn't start on the project until the following year. But in the meantime, we had lots of long talks on the phone chatting over story details, and a new space craft the "Marco Polo" that would feature in it. In the end I drew up full deck plans for the craft, and Keith designed the outside look of the spaceship. Then he painted a stunning visual showing both the flight deck, and exterior views of the ship. Once the fans saw it, the remaining artwork pages of the story were instantly booked up! The first page visual followed, and then the

We hit another problem - as Don had regular work on from a number of sources he could only fit our pages in now and then. Some years he only got three pages done (his best year was eight boards) and in all it would take until 1999 to complete the rest of the PM story.

There was another difficulty as well - the way Don worked. The procedure was he would draw a pencil rough from the script, which I would then comment on - and from that he would proceed to do the page. He would then work from the rough, and if he though he could improve a frame would do it often without me knowing, but in doing so would sometimes loose important background detail the original script called for.

When writing the narrative I would often have a visual sub-story running in the background over a number of frames - to give the whole thing more depth - but as Don didn't refer back to the original script when creating the finished page, he sometimes would make speaking people fill a whole frame, and the background sequence would be lost, disrupting part of the tale.

At first I was to much in awe of him to say anything, but as our relationship grew over the years, getting more daring, I would have some frames redone to put the important missing detail back. But I would dread an update phone call from him, when he mentioned he had had a better idea for a frame, and had gone for it. Sometimes the revised frame was much, much better and became a bonus - but there was other times when I would lose stuff I really wanted. For a writer it is very frustrating to loose part of your creation, if the artist didn't realise why it had been included in the first place! At least I had a chance to correct some (sadly not all) of this.

"...IF NO-ONE ELSE WANTED TO PUBLISH IT, I WOULD DO SO MYSELF, IN A MAGAZINE CALLED "SPACESHIP AWAY"

Now while all this had been going on, I was approach a number of times by people wanting to include the strip in what they were doing:- Hawk books, in the correct sequence after The Ship That Lived tale; the BBC in their Tomorrows World magazine; and The Planet on Sunday - but we couldn't oblige as our story was not finished - and when it was, all these publications, plus New Eagle no longer existed. What to do now?

Because of personal problems, and that I had no luck in placing it anywhere, the project ended up in the doldrums until 2003. But I was still determined to get it in print, and came up with the idea that if no-one else wanted to publish it, I would do so myself, in a magazine called "Spaceship Away".

First I had to get a licence from the Dan Dare Corporation Ltd. to bring out new Dan Dare stories - having done that, it was full steam ahead and SA Part 1 - a 24 page, full colour, quality print issue, came out in October 2003 - It carried the first three episodes of The Phoenix Mission, plus a Daily World Post story set up page, along with a Keith Watson cover, and his Marco Polo flight deck painting - in the centre pages. The magazine also started the project background story, including all the roughs and visuals. Finally the back page featured a light hearted "Dan Bear" strip.

It was well received, but as I was a beginner at this game, I made a mistake or two, so it became both an education and a learning curve. However, it also put me in an ideal spot to be told of other projects fans were working on, and as SA gave them somewhere to display them, the magazine just got better and bigger all the time.

More strips - including two more light humour ones - plus photo's of DD related models, along with loads of articles (some by surviving members of the original Frank Hampson Dan Dare team) came in, accompanied by a deluge of readers letters. The page count rapidly grew:- Part 2, 32 pages; Part 3, 36 pages; Part 7, 40 pages; by Part 10, 44 pages was standard, with some special issues having more.

Once the artwork for PM story had been finished - the hunt was on for other artists to draw our hero (Don didn't want to take on an even bigger project) We tried out a few, and David Pugh did the first page of the "Green Nemesis" saga for us - the problem was the fans would only sponsor original DD artists, so things looked tricky - then I came up with the idea of just feeding Don a page at a time so he wouldn't feel overloaded - it worked and in that way we got through 13½ episodes before the magazine *Continued on page 42.*

I CAN'T RAISE THE DELAWARE.
COLONEN, THERE'S A SWARM OF HOPPING MAD CONTRPTIONS OU THERE FLITTING ABOUT AND BLASTING EVERY-THING IN SITE/
THEY'RE COMING THIS WAY, EARTH FRIENDS !
MAN THE GUNS !
NO GOOD, EARTH COLONEL, NO POWER/
EE, THEN WE'VE HAD IT, LAD !
DON HARLEY
CONTINUED

caught up with him - after that he still contributed some pages, with Tim Booth doing the rest. (Tim was a fan and artist from Ireland, he stumbled across the magazine when visiting London - and wrote in with samples of his DD work. In fact, I was so impressed when I saw it, that I invited him to put his own Dan Dare strip in the magazine - and so "The Gates of Eden" started running.)

The quality of the print also attracted many established artists to our pages - Part 3 for example had a Graham Blethman cut-a-way drawing of the Marco Polo spacecraft over it's centre pages. (He would become a regular contributor) The magazine would take a stand at some comic fairs - and also stage a couple of Spaceship Away days so that fans could meet the team, plus get the odd mention on TV and radio. Ray Wright, who was involved with real rocket experiments, offered to do a web-site for us, and Joan Porter - Frank Hampson's long time assistant - vetted my DD story to keep Dan and Digby's dialogue just right - along with the odd article or two.

Issue 7 (now with three DD strips and all the other regular stuff) also started to venture into other Sci-Fi strips as well, starting with Charles Chilton's "Journey Into Space" drawn by Tacconi, and in the following issue - Sydney Jordan's "Hal Starr" coloured by John Ridgway joined the pack. It was such an exciting time!

Oh, and I must mention Des Shaw - my right-hand graphics man - who without his help SA would never had been born - he prepared it all ready for the printers - and found much better and cheaper ones for us to use - from Part 3 the magazine also had laminated covers as well!

After Part 22 came out in October 2010, with the last episode of "Green Nemesis", and my 19 years of pushing the Dan Dare revival project - I stepped down - Des took over - and SA is still going!

The list of known artists who contributed in just my time with the magazine, is quite impressive - and Des has added more since then! (onwards and upwards!) Here is what they did for us:-

Original FH team members:- Keith Watson, Don Harley, and Bruce Cornwell all did artwork, and Joan Porter, Greta Tomlinson, and Don also wrote articles for the magazine. Plus, not to forget David Gould a Fleetway lettering artist - who hand lettered all the DD art boards as well.

Keith, Don, and Joan were working with me almost from the start, next we added Andy Boyce - an archaeology digs artist, who also sent home comic sketches of "Dan Bear" to his lady - when I was looking for a lighter touch to add to SA, and saw some of this work, I invited him on board.

Part 2, brought in Ray Aspden and his comic strips as well; along with another DD strip written by Nick Hill, and drawn by Martin Baines - this would start a long association with Martin and the magazine. There was a four page write up on the "Delware" spacecraft. A half page - Readers Corner - also starts in this issue, showing things (mainly one frame funnies) fans have been up to. And we take a look at some of the development drawings done by the Frank Hampson Studio - more would also appear in later issues.

Part 3, would see a fans model of Tharl's Flagship (made by Sid Clark), on the front cover - which in turn would eventually lead to a regular model page in the mag. Ray Aspden's "Mekki" strip also

Continued on page 45.

CALLING ALL TREENS - UNLESS YOU SURRENDER I WILL DEPRESSURISE THE SHIP IN TWO MINUTES !
GREAT ONE WHAT DO WE DO ?
IGNORE IT ! "EARTHTAP" REVEALS A RUSE. NOW— WHEN WILL YOU BE READY TO STORM THEIR BASE ?
10 RONITS, MASTER.
EXCELLENT
MANTIG, SHOW ME THE BATTLECRAFT.
IT HAS STOPPED ALONGSIDE THE EARTHCHAIRS, MASTER.
PREPARE FOR BATTLE !
CONTINUED

Dan Dare is used by kind permission of the Dan Dare Corporation

started in this issue, along with another DD related strip start "Rocket Pilot" by Keith Page.

Part 4, and Eric Mackenzie's "Dan Dire" strip started - a different twist on our hero - fans were not sure what to make of this one! This issue also reported on our stand at the Bristol Comic Festival where we were joined by Ian Wheeler, John Freeman, and Chris Weston - all of which would bring their own talents to the magazine in the future. And Andrew Skilleter founder member of the first Dan Dare fan club, and a Dr Who artist also had a Mekon with Treens painting showing in this addition.

Part 5, a John Ridgway take on Sir Hubert Guest turns up in this issue, along with an article written by Frank Hampson in 1951 - supplied by Joan Porter. The "Models from Dan Dare's World" page also starts. Alastair Compton (author on books about FH) supplies an interesting piece as well. Also Andrew Skilleter adds illustrations to Simon Garrett's "All Change" that runs for three issues.

Part 6, takes a look at a foreign Eagle reprint - "Hauk", this would lead to a series with glimpses at other counties takes on Dan Dare. John Ridgeway colours up a black & white photo of the DD mural that was at the Hultons Boys and Girls exhibition in the 50's.

Part 7, sees the start of the first ever reprint of the 1950's "Journey Into Space" strip from the Express Weekly - along with a write up on the iconic BBC radio series. Ray Aspden adds another regular light touch to the mag - "Our Bertie" (Mrs Digby's little lad) Plus another new series starts - "Designed For Flight" by Jeremy Briggs - a look at where FH might have got some of his idea's from.

Part 8, and Sydney Jordan's "Hal Starr" - a strip he did for "Eppo" in Holand, joins the magazine - translated into English and coloured by John Ridgway. Artist Gerald Palmer, also makes his first outing in the mag, with a centre spread on Dan's Anastasia spacecraft.

Part 9, Tim Booth's "The Gates of Eden" Dan Dare strip set just after Eagle's first DD story starts, plus yet another article by Alastair Crompton.

Part 10, Martin Baines adds a little cartoon of myself to the editorial page. We have a Chris Weston centre spread, and a model from Dan Bear's world! - Plus a DD montage by John Burns.

Part 11, all the usual stuff, plus extra input from Sydney Jordan. A Graham Bleathman centre spread - and a look at the real rocketry that Ray Wright is involved in at Hertfordshire University.

Part 12, Bruce Cornwell does a DD centre spread for us, Denis Steeper treats us to part 1 of one of his Dan Dare text stories, and we also examine our Graham Bleathman connection.

Part 13, we look at Dan Dare in Italy in this issue, have another John Ridgway centre spread, along with a Dan & Dig by Martin Baines, and Mick Baker speculates about the System of Los.

Part 14, An Ian Kennedy "New Eagle" DD centre spread this time. Paul Napp looks at further mysteries from the Sabul System, and Denis Steeper concludes his text story.

Part 15, we announce SA binders for collectors of our magazine, Greta Tomlinson writes up her memories of her days in the FH studio, and we have a Graham Bleathman cut-a-way of the Bakehouse studio. Plus a new strip by Iain McClumpha "Space Girls" starts.

Part 16, two new strip stories start - Ron Turner's "Nick Hazard" and John Freeman / Mike Nicoll's "Ex Astris", plus an DD Epson studio cut-a-way over the centre spread (Graham Bleathman) Don Harley writes up his thoughts on the Bayford Lodge DD studio with photos and artwork.

Part 17, Stephen Baxter writes an article for us; Mike Noble does a centre spread; Graham Bleathman, a cut-a-way of the Anastasia cockpit, and Don Harley writes about working with Frank Bellamy. Plus another hidden art board frame.

Part 18, Bruce Cornwell talks about his days with Dan Dare; a Gerald Palmer / Don Harley centre spread, the 'Anastasia' by Ian Kennedy, and a window on the art-world of Keith Page. Plus a look at another Frank Hampson rough, and finished frame from Operation Saturn.

Part 19, a Frank Bellamy "Garth" strip joins the magazine, in colour thanks to John Ridgway. And Dave Westaway gives us a write up about Bellamy's years on the strip. Nick Spencer writes about when he was taught by Frank Hampson at Epsom College, we have a John Burns centre spread; and John Lawrence gives us the low-down of how himself, along with Ron Turner, Phil Harbottle, and John Ridgway created the strip. Graham Bleathman also does a cut-a-way of a Nimbus spacecraft.

Part 20, there is a write up on a Spaceship Away Day in Bournemouth on the 14th of November,

A centre spread cut-a-way (Graham again) of Dan Dare's Anastasia spaceship. A preview of a new Dan Dare action figure; plus another hidden art frame. Along with an advert for "Crikey!" magazine. Plus a new Ex Astris story starts.

Part 21, a write up on the BBC at the Bayford Lodge DD studio in October 1958. Frank Hampson's Nationwide artwork takes up the centre spread. A write up on Keith Watson and Dan Dare, with Chris Weston's tribute art to Keith. Plus a "Tempus Frangit" cut-a-way by Graham Bleathman (of course!)

Part 22, An Ian Kennedy cover; Don Harley recollects six decades with Dan Dare, A new Journey into Space story (Shadow over Britain) starts. There's a whole feature on the "Planet on Sunday" along with Dan Dare artwork that wasn't published. Pat Mills gives as an article of his part in Dan Dare's revival, along with a Gerry Embleton reprise of his New Eagle DD. A Bruce Cornwell centre spread cut-a-way done in 1950 on the number two rocket ship. A new Tim Booth DD strip story (Parsecular Tales) starts, along with an article on Tim. Plus a Graham Bleathman cut-a-way of the Mekon's flying chair, and I sign off from the magazine with a special letter.

For more information or subscribe look up the Spaceship Away web page http://spaceshipaway.org/

Artwork by Martin Baines

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DAN BEAR

By Andy Boyce

The launching committee celebrates –

There's just one thing –

What happens to a launch committee after a launch?

Crikey, we'd be out of a job!

Inside the space ship, Dan is being trained by scientist Bessie Bear.

...and that's the tachometer...

Why do you meter tacks?

Right, Algysius, here's the plan. You remove a few bolts from the ship. We will then declare the ship unsafe to fly. We can "ground" it for months.

As evening falls.

Hurry up, Algysius – it's supper-time.

Might as well look around. Gosh it's dark – ah, there's the light switch.

ENGINES TEST (DANGEROUS)

©AB 2004

RRRRRRRRRRRRRRR –

Oh no – that noise –

P-poorly tummy?

NO! The engines!

To be Continued

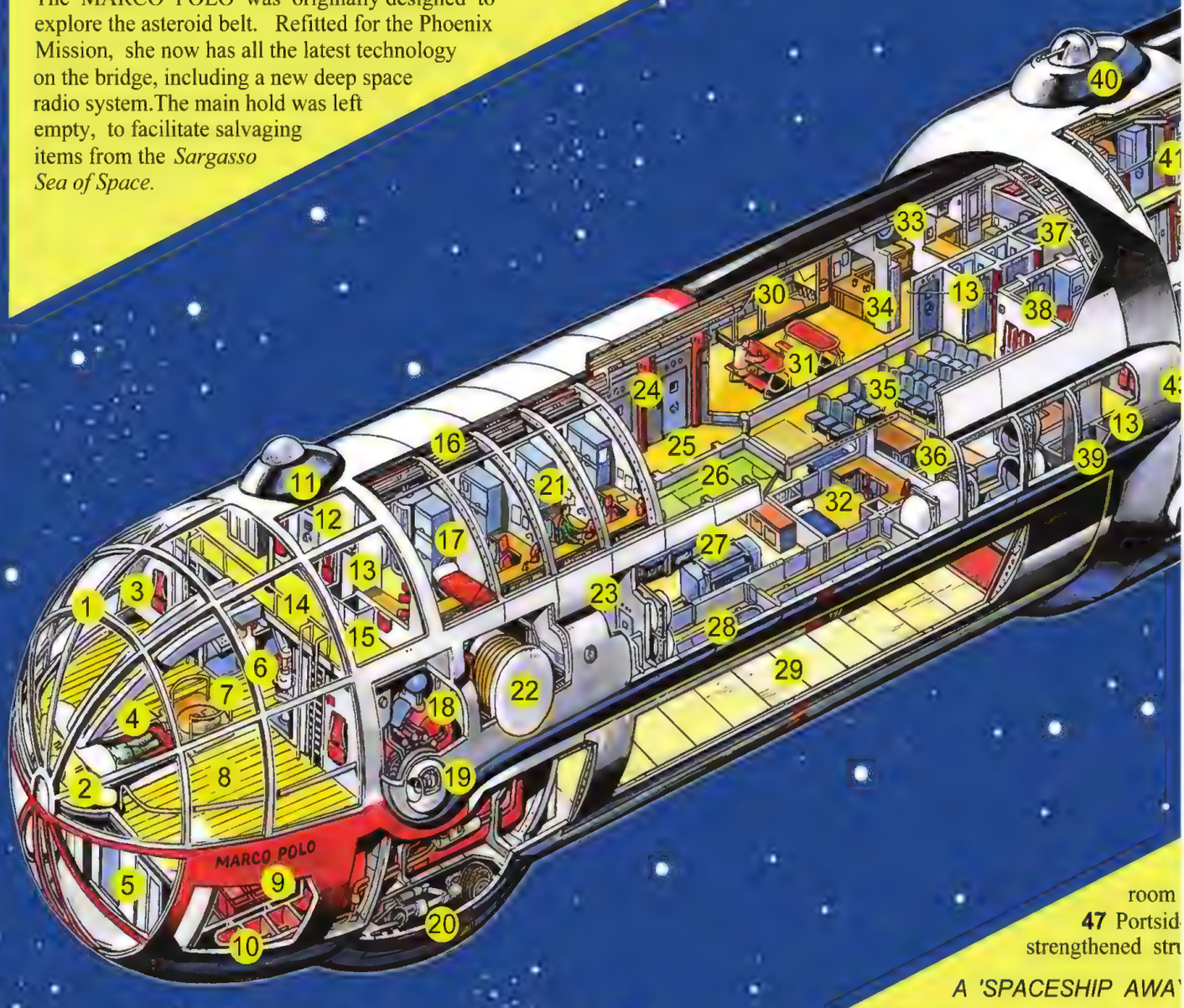
MARCO POLO - Explorer Class S

Designed to be in deep space for long periods of time, rather than weeks - the four deck ***Explorer Class*** **MARCO POLO** *(40ft in diameter and 238ft in length)* has a number of extra facilities not found on the standard S.F. craft. It has two space drives *(Impulse and Rocket)* so it is able to fly anywhere, safety bulkheads in all sections, three disintegrator defence cannon turrets *(forming a triangle around amidships),* ten two-man space chariots, a medical section, a research laboratory, air and water recycling plants, a hold full of spares and a two-storey workshop. In addition, a large main hold *(76ft long and two decks deep)* which can carry tons of extra equipment or material. The ship has a normal crew complement of 20, with extra accommodation for five research scientists.

The MARCO POLO was originally designed to explore the asteroid belt. Refitted for the Phoenix Mission, she now has all the latest technology on the bridge, including a new deep space radio system.The main hold was left empty, to facilitate salvaging items from the *Sargasso Sea of Space.*

SHIPS PROPULSION

A One of 12 rocket fuel tanks. **B** Particle impulse wave rectifier. **C** I
D Impulse wave particle condenser. **E** Forward internal fuel ta
stanchion. **F** Electro - sphere : Primary Ion particle impulse accele
G Liquid fuel tank. **H** Herculeneum strengthened stabilising fin.
I Pressurised condensed solid fuel propellant tanks. **J** Secondary impulse wave particle accelerator. **K** Impulse wave steering rockets. **L** Rocket combustion chamber for main impulse wave engine (used when in impulse wave fields). **M** Maintenance gantry. **N** Liquid fuel rockets used for General propulsion and steering **O** Solid fuel rocket boosters used to achieve escape velocity during take-off.



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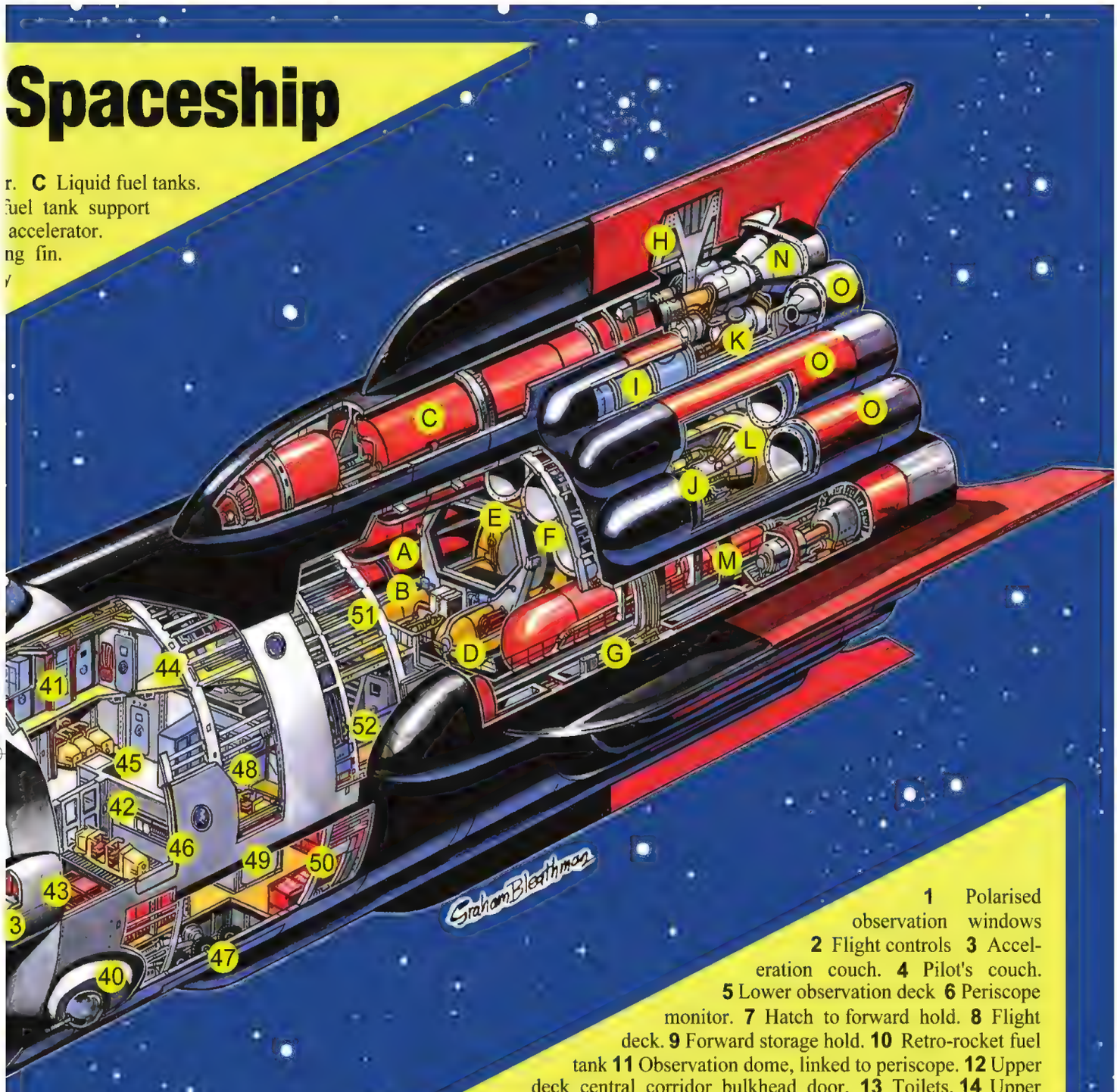
47 Portsid
strengthened str

A 'SPACESHIP AWA

Spaceship

r. **C** Liquid fuel tanks.
uel tank support
accelerator.
ng fin.



1 Polarised observation windows **2** Flight controls **3** Acceleration couch. **4** Pilot's couch. **5** Lower observation deck **6** Periscope monitor. **7** Hatch to forward hold. **8** Flight deck. **9** Forward storage hold. **10** Retro-rocket fuel tank **11** Observation dome, linked to periscope. **12** Upper deck central corridor bulkhead door. **13** Toilets. **14** Upper observation deck. **15** Upper deck storage. **16** Life support conduits. **17** Ship commander's cabin. **18** Retro-rocket engine. **19** Swivel-mounted multi-directional retro-rockets (port & starboard). **20** Portside forward undercarriage. **21** Forward portside crew cabins (3). **22** Main airlock with telescopic transfer tube. **23** Spacesuit lockers and tools. **24** Forward starboard crew cabins (5). **25** Central upper deck corridor. **26** Gymnasium. **27** Air / water recycling facility. **28** Compressed air tanks. **29** Main cargo hold. **30** Skittle alley **31** Crew mess. **32** Doctor's surgery. **33** Food preparation area. **34** Bar and food serving area. **35** Briefing room / cinema (seats 25). **36** Laboratory. **37** Cold store. **38** Quartermaster's office / cinema projection room **39** Laundry. **40** Disintegrator defence cannon turrets (upper, port and starboard) **41** Officers / VIP cabins. **42** Portside chariot room airlock. **43** Storage area **44** Upper workshop. **45** Chariot room. (10 stored and maintained) **46** Chariot airlock hatch. Portside rear undercarriage. **48** Chariot service bay. **49** Pressurised pallet lift. **50** Storage hold for spare parts. **51** Herculeneum ed structure contains air pumps and additional life support system. **52** Lower workshop.

AWAY' Cutaway . . . drawn by Graham Bleathman, based on plans originally produced by Rod Barzilay ©

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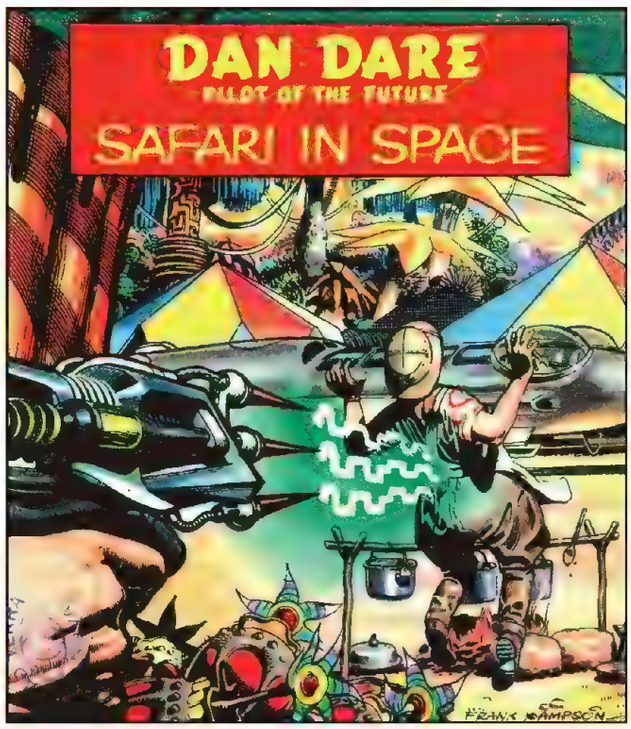
MODELS FROM DAN DARE'S WORLD - 3

This time we have another of Sid Clark's models, a full size replica of the Impulse Wave Electro-Stunner, from the "SAFARI IN SPACE" story . . .

Sid sent in these notes with his photographs:-

Dan Dare got there first again - there is now a genuine electro-stunner in use by some police forces.

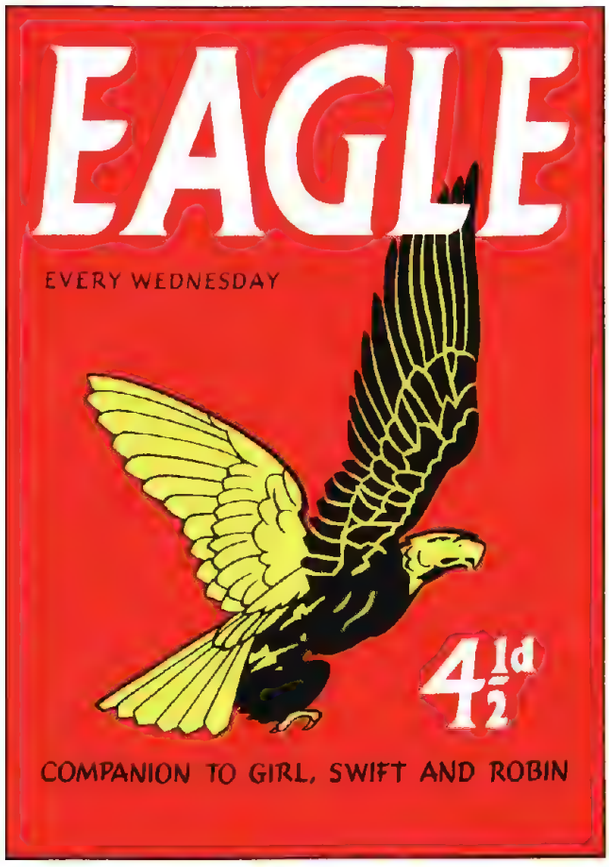
This was the first model of DD origin I made, as you can see the barrel rings were two customised brush handles; end caps for the three needles; golf tees, copper tubing for ancillary parts, and

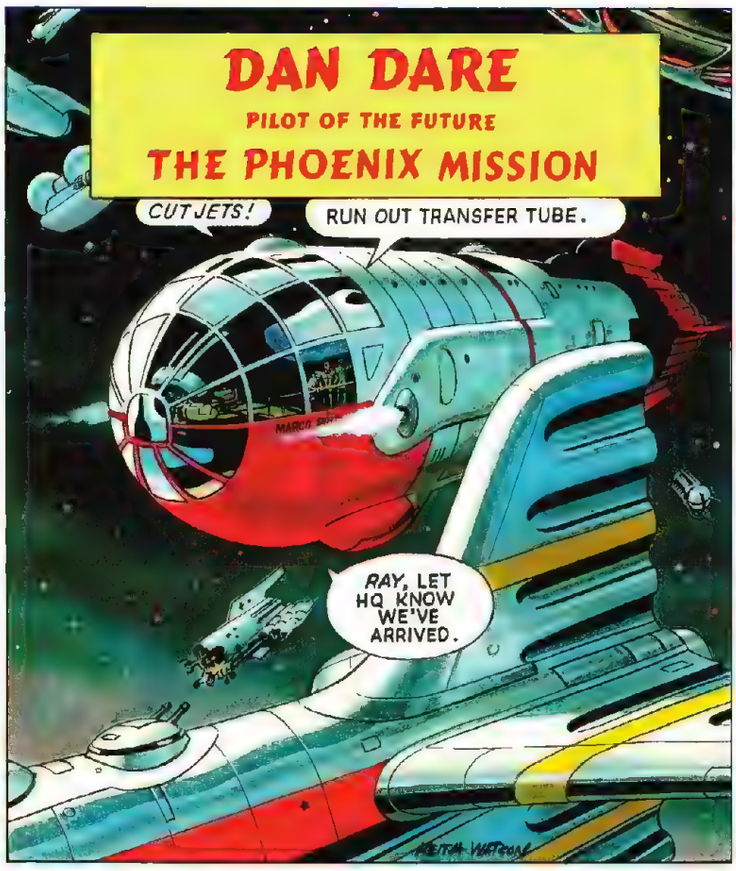


the palms of rubber gloves (no particular brand) cut out & used for the butt grips; end ball shape at rear - a plastic towing car ball cover (just the right size) and the insulator between handle & body a mouse mat cut, rolled & glued into an oval. The rest of the model was ply, balsa, P.38 car filler and plasticard. Painted with metallic car sprays.

Incidentally, I drew up a 3 view drawing to get the basics correct. But I prefer to add the detail on the model as I go along. Finally I added weight to give it a realistic feel.

SUPER NEW DAN DARE SPACE ADVENTURE BEGINS TODAY!





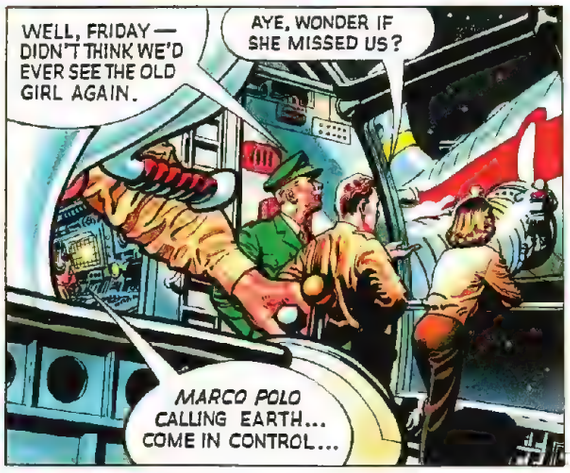
2012 AD

It is some months after the defeat of the Mekon and his robot armies.

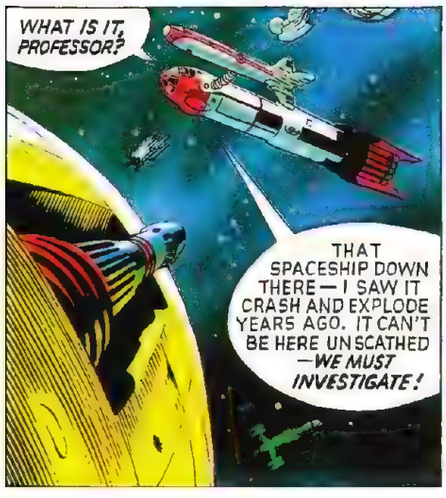
Earth is busy rebuilding and Space Fleet resources are thinly spread as few spacecraft remain serviceable. The urgent need to restore its stock of ships leads the I.S.F. to look into a number of options.

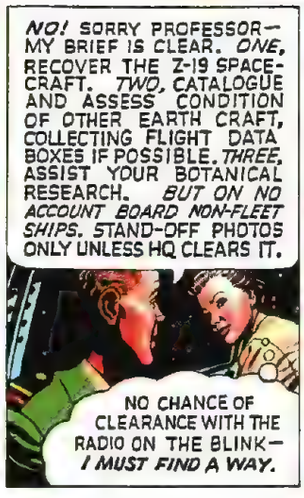
Out of range of standard Space Fleet vessels, the re-fitted deep-space craft *MARCO POLO* arrives at the *SARGASSO SEA OF SPACE*. *(A strange "backwash" area in the Solar System where for some unknown reason much space debris has accumulated.)*

The primary mission is to salvage a Z-19 space ship that was abandoned there .....


WELL, FRIDAY— DIDN'T THINK WE'D EVER SEE THE OLD GIRL AGAIN.
AYE, WONDER IF SHE MISSED US?
MARCO POLO CALLING EARTH... COME IN CONTROL...

SIR—I CAN'T RAISE ANYONE.
SO MUCH FOR OUR SPECIAL RADIO THE BOFFINS SAID WOULD WORK ANYWHERE!—*RUN FAULT ANALYSIS.*
THAT CAN'T BE HERE!
STEVE!


WHAT IS IT, PROFESSOR?
THAT SPACESHIP DOWN THERE—I SAW IT CRASH AND EXPLODE YEARS AGO. IT CAN'T BE HERE UNSCATHED —*WE MUST INVESTIGATE!*


NO! SORRY PROFESSOR— MY BRIEF IS CLEAR. *ONE,* RECOVER THE Z-19 SPACECRAFT. *TWO,* CATALOGUE AND ASSESS CONDITION OF OTHER EARTH CRAFT, COLLECTING FLIGHT DATA BOXES IF POSSIBLE. *THREE,* ASSIST YOUR BOTANICAL RESEARCH. *BUT ON NO ACCOUNT BOARD NON-FLEET SHIPS.* STAND-OFF PHOTOS ONLY UNLESS HQ CLEARS IT.
NO CHANCE OF CLEARANCE WITH THE RADIO ON THE BLINK— *I MUST FIND A WAY.*

Dan Dare, originally created by Frank Hampson, is written by Rod Barzilay, and drawn by Keith Watson

AH, DAN—COME IN. WE'VE LOST TOUCH WITH THE MARCO POLO, AND FRANKLY I'M WORRIED.
CONTROLLER
SIR HUBERT GUEST
KCM, OM, OUN, DSO DFC
SPACE FLEET OPERATIONS
BUT SHE'S AN EXPLORER CLASS SHIP, EQUIPPED FOR ANYTHING!
RIGHT AWAY, CHIEF.
TRUE, BUT WE STILL CAN'T RAISE THEM. THE ANASTASIA IS THE ONLY AVAILABLE CRAFT CAPABLE OF WORKING OUTSIDE THE SPACELANES. I'D LIKE YOU AND DIGBY TO TAKE A LOOK. TWENTY-FOUR LIVES ARE AT STAKE!
DIG, GET ANNIE READY—WE'RE JOINING THE PHOENIX MISSION. DETAIL FLAMER TO TAKE CARE OF STRIPEY WHILE WE'RE AWAY.
AYE AYE, SIR.
PHOENIX? OH, AYE—THAT 'HOUDINI' TYPE FIREBIRD WITH THE FRY-THEN-FLY KNACK!
ASTRAL COLLEGE—FLAMER'S DORMITORY...
AH, FLAMER LAD, THE COLONEL AND I ARE ON OPS. COULD YOU LOOK AFTER STRIPEY UNTIL WE GET BACK?
SPACE ASTRAL COLLEGE
YOU BET, DIGBY SIR. HI, STRIPEY OLD PAL!
DEEP SPACE—HERE WE COME!
FAR AWAY, ENGINEERS ARE FIGHTING A LOSING BATTLE WITH THE RADIO...
WE'VE RUN ALL THE CHECKS TWICE OVER AND FOUND NOTHING WRONG—YET IT'S DEAD AS A DODO!
THIS IS WASTING TIME—PUT OUT A BLEATER. RADIO OR NOT, WE HAVE A SPACESHIP TO RECOVER.
TWO HOURS LATER, THE ANASTASIA RECEIVES A CALL...
DAN—SORRY, M'BOY—I'M OBLIGED TO DUMP A V.I.P. ON YOU. DON'T DOUBLE BACK, DIVERT TO MAJOR ONE. I'LL SEND HIM BY EXPRESS ROCKET TO RENDEZVOUS THERE. E.T.A. 1530 25 2 ZULU—OUT.
NOW WHAT'S THAT ALL ABOUT?
TROUBLE, I'LL BE BOUND!
HOWEVER, TROUBLE IS ALREADY BREWING AT MAJOR ONE—A SATELLITE SPACE STATION BETWEEN EARTH AND MOON...
BUT I MUST GET BACK TO MARS—MY ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH!
DR. DARE—I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU WANGLED YOUR WAY THIS FAR, BUT WE'VE BARELY ENOUGH SHIPS TO SUPPLY THE MARTIAN COLONY AS IT IS—AND YOU EXPECT ME TO LAY ON TRANSPORT JUST SO YOU CAN DIG HOLES ON MARS?
IDIOT! I CAN'T UNRAVEL THE MARTIAN MYSTERIES FROM HERE!
BUT FATE IS WEAVING ITS WEB FOR THEM ALL. ELSEWHERE, AN ANCIENT, DORMANT MENACE IS QUIETLY BIDING ITS TIME...
CONTINUED
Don Harley

Dan Dare, originally created by Frank Hampson, is written by Rod Barzilay, and drawn by Don Harley.

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FOURPENCE-HALFPENNY

EVERY FRIDAY

EAGLE

EPISODE 3

DAN DARE
THE GATES OF EDEN

SFJ2 TO NIMROD -WELCOME TO MARS ORBIT. COME IN ON THE PORT SIDE BELOW THE BRIDGE.

SO ZIS IS WHAT SFJ2 LOOKS LIKE? AND WE ARE -HOW YOU SAY- A NEEDLE IN ZE HAYSTACK?

BRING US ALONGSIDE, PIERRE OLD SON - THEY'VE GOTTA GANGWAY WE CAN HOOK UP TO.

EASIER SAID THAN DONE, YANKEE.

SFJ2 TO NIMROD - - DOCK YOUR BIRD AND COME UP TO THE BRIDGE.

NUDGE HER IN GENTLY BOYS.

I AM NUDGING... COMING UNDER THE PORTSIDE NOW.

NEAT WORK PILOT- BUT I'VE JUST SEEN SOMETHING EVEN NEATER!

ALL THE GANGWAY CREW - THEY'RE WEARING THERON PERSONAL ROCKET MOTORS ON THEIR SPACESUITS!
NO WONDER THIS FLYING SHAMBLES IS GOING UP SO FAST!
OKAY - LET'S SEE WHAT ALL THE FUSS IS ABOUT...
AIRLOCK OPEN, GANGWAY PRESSURE EQUALISED
...WILL YOU COME INTO MY PARLOUR, SAID THE SPIDER TO THE FLY...
OPEN
ALL HANDS STAND BY FOR FERRY LAUNCH IN FIVE MINUTES!
ALORS- ZE BIG BOSS - MAYBE HE KNOWS WHY WE'RE HERE?
I'D KNOW THAT VOICE ANYWHERE... IT'S ...
GEORGE BRYAN!
HANK AND PIERRE! I'VE NOT SEEN YOU BOYS SINCE ROCKET SCHOOL. WELCOME ABOARD!
HOW DID YOU GET TO BE IN CHARGE OF ALL THIS?
IN CHARGE? HECK NO- THE ACTUAL C.O.'S DOWN ON MARS - I'M ONLY THE FERRY BOSS AROUND HERE- AS YOU'RE JUST ABOUT TO SEE...
...THING IS- ANY FOOL CAN TAKE A FERRY OFF A RAMP - DOCKING'S THE HARD PART.
GOOD WORK PILOT - NOW LET'S SEE YOU BRING THAT CRATE BACK IN!
STAND BY FOR TAKE OFF 5-4-3-
2-1-ZERO! FERRY AWAAY!
TIM BOOTH
FANTASTIQUE! BUT I STILL DO NOT UN'ERSTAND - WHY ARE WE HERE?
CAN'T HELP THERE OL'SON. NOW, -IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME BOYS- I'VE GOT PILOTS TO DEBRIEF.
I JUST WANT SOMEONE TO EXPLAIN WHY WE HAD TO DIVERT FROM OUR MAIN MISSION AND COME HERE...
YOU? HERE!?
THAT PRECISE EXPLANATION IS STANDING RIGHT BEHIND YOU BIRDBOY!
TO BE CONTINUED

Dan Dare is written and drawn by Tim Booth from characters originally created by Frank Hampson

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BRITAIN'S FOREMOST NATIONAL STRIP CARTOON WEEKLY

EAGLE

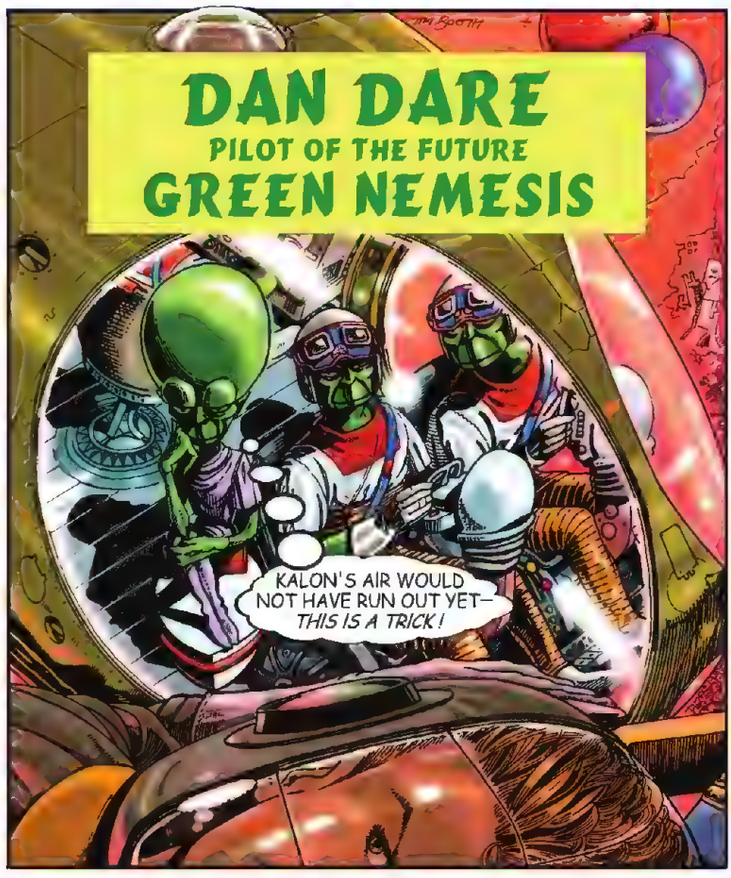
EVERY WEDNESDAY

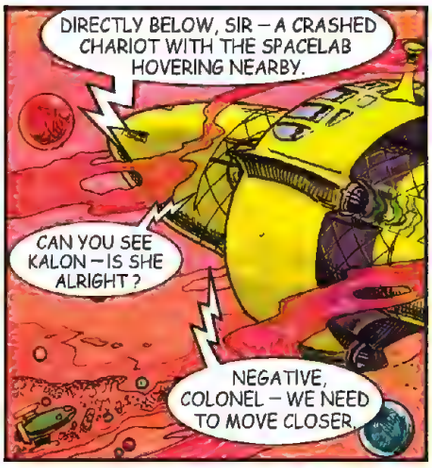
4½d

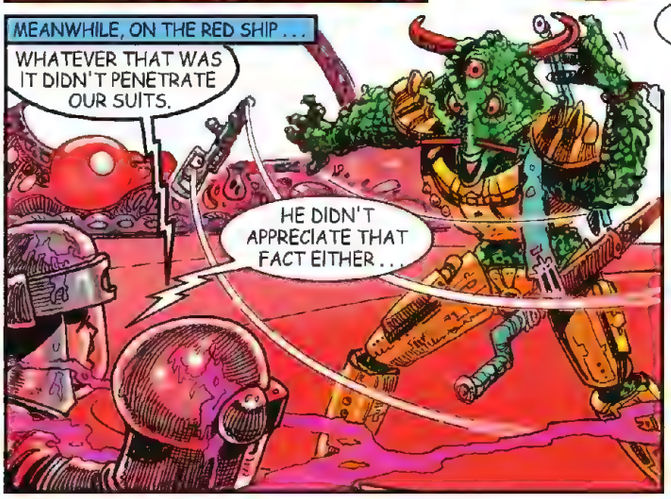
COMPANION TO GIRL, SWIFT AND ROBIN

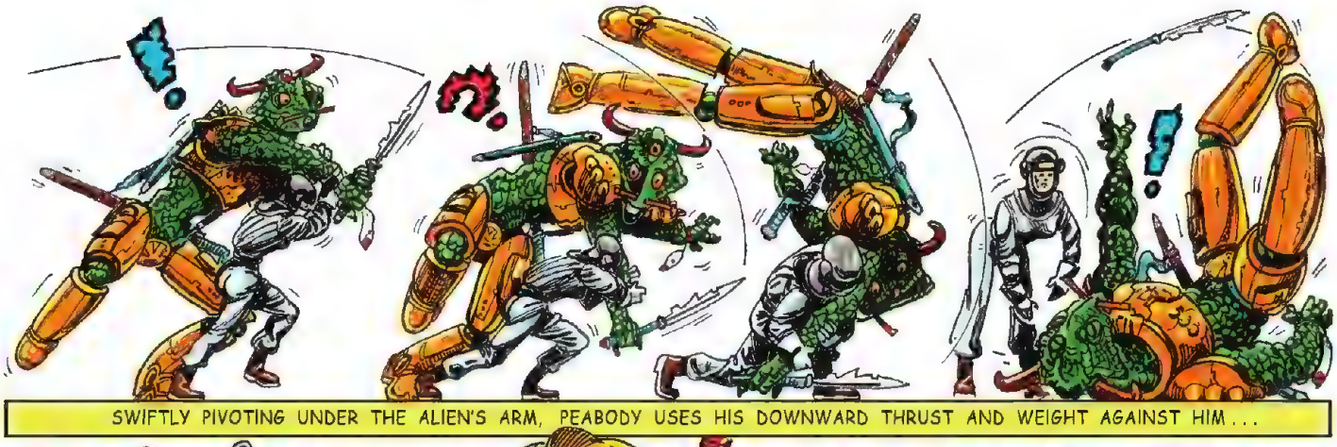
EPISODE 31

DAN DARE
PILOT OF THE FUTURE
GREEN NEMESIS

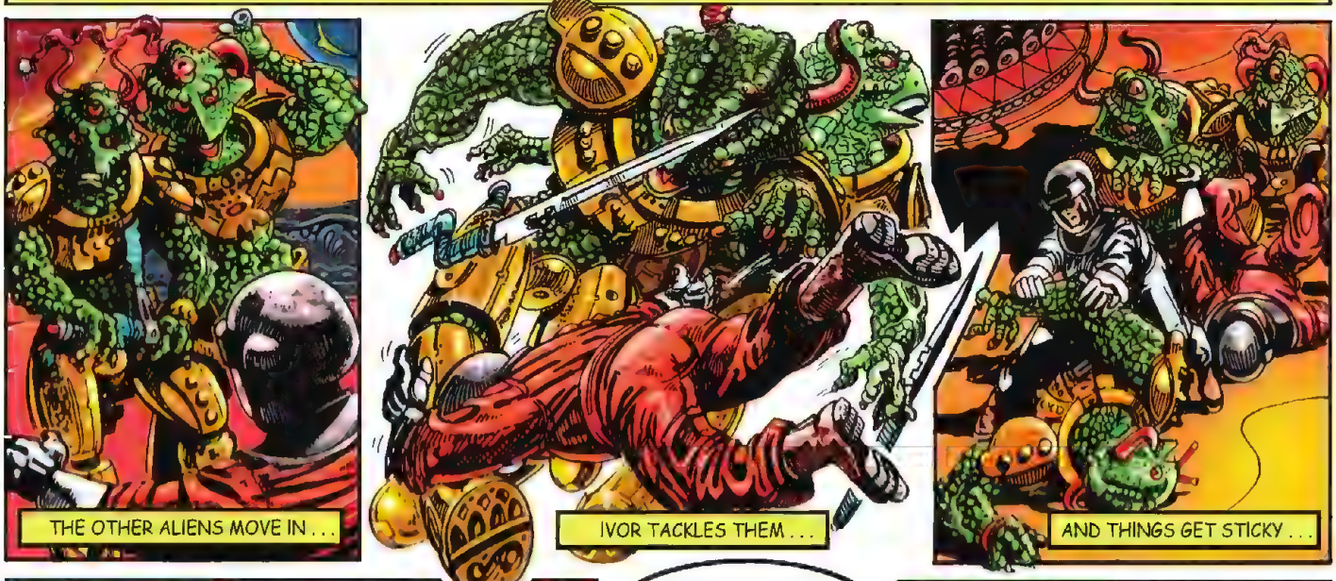



DIRECTLY BELOW, SIR — A CRASHED CHARIOT WITH THE SPACELAB HOVERING NEARBY.
CAN YOU SEE KALON — IS SHE ALRIGHT?
NEGATIVE, COLONEL — WE NEED TO MOVE CLOSER.





SWIFTLY PIVOTING UNDER THE ALIEN'S ARM, PEABODY USES HIS DOWNWARD THRUST AND WEIGHT AGAINST HIM . . .



ON THE SPACELAB . . .
DARE TO MEKON –
WE HAVE YOU COVERED. YOU CANNOT ESCAPE. SURRENDER!
ON THE CONTRARY, COLONEL, YOU WILL NOT SHOOT IN CASE YOU HIT THE THERON.
HAVE KALON BROUGHT INSIDE – I WILL QUESTION HER.
DAN PONDERS . . .
HE'S RIGHT – FIRING FROM HERE IS TOO RISKY.
THE SPACELAB'S AIRLOCK IS OPENING, COLONEL.
GET IN CLOSE, DIG, I WANT THE MEKON TO LOOK STRAIGHT INTO OUR GUN BARRELS.

Dan Dare, originally created by Frank Hampson, is written by Rod Barzilay, and drawn by Tim Booth.

KID KONG

No 1
EVERY SATURDAY
14th JUNE, 1975
MONSTER FUN COMIC 6p
FREE Plate Wobbler INSIDE
Meet KID KONG and his freaky friends in this crazy new comic..

Inspired by **Hollywood's King Kong films, 'Kid Kong' was another long-running strip in the IPC weekly comics of the 70s and the early 80s**. It was designed by Robert Nixon, from an idea suggested over the phone by Bob Paynter, who wanted it for his new MONSTER FUN COMIC. When speaking about his favourite characters, **Robert Nixon once said he'd put Kid Kong virtually on equal par with his all-time favourite** – Frankie Stein.

The first three-page episode in MONSTER FUN COMIC No. 1 with the cover date of 14th June, 1975 introduced Kid Kong as 'the biggest gorilla in the world and son of the famous King Kong'. He was an exhibit and an attraction of a travelling fun fair. Tired of being mistreated and called names, Kid broke free from his cage, barged into a department store, donned a special outsize school uniform (a jacket and a cap, but no trousers) and went to wander the town. He soon found himself in the front yard of Granny Smith – an elderly lady who'd lived alone since her boy went to sea. The frisky granny was short-sighted and hard of hearing, so she took the giant ape for an overgrown boy and did not hesitate to offer him shelter, food and protection. Interestingly, a re-drawn version of the introductory story was printed a few months later in issue No. 13 of the comic.

The early episodes featured a few recurring characters, including Miss Peabody, the snooping neighbour; Mr. Snodgrass, the man from the Council; Spike, the trouble-making kid from the neighbourhood whom Granny considered a bad influence on her 'boy'; and Doctor Payne who taught Kid Kong to peel his 'nanas in order to avoid stomach problems.

The primary storyline, however, was focused on Kid Kong and Granny Smith. Kid was a brute and a glutton who didn't know his own strength, so in this regard he was like Frankie Stein. But differently from Frankie, Kid was fully aware he was unlike people around him. He was quick to realise when he did wrong and admit his guilt. Unlike Frankie's dad Professor Cube, Granny Smith was a loving grandmother who took very good care of her adopted 'child' and was very protective of him: townsfolk soon realised they should think twice before calling Kid a gorilla, or any such name, in Granny's presence. She didn't seem to be bothered with the thoughtless destruction that Kid wrought regularly on her cottage. She was always prepared to go the extra mile to keep Kid happy and satisfied, and supply him with 'nanas: his banana-addiction was there from the very start!

In the early episodes, the comedy was derived from Gran's short-sightedness, Kid's giant size, clumsiness and strength, his silliness or his attitude to humans whom he considered to be ugly creatures and pitied them for being furless, having to use the funny thing called 'doors' to enter buildings (instead of doing it 'the easy way' like himself) and being unable to eat with their feet as well as their hands... Kid also thought human language was difficult to understand, therefore he preferred pidgin-English, grunting and pantomime, which provided a further source of comedy.

As the weeks went by, Kid's appetite for 'nanas increasingly became the recurrent theme and the most common source of humour. Weekly instalments usually told of Kid's and/or Granny's efforts to get hold of some of his favourite food. A few stories didn't have the quest for bananas as the main line, but they still ended with Kid or Granny receiving a prize or reward in the form of the fruit. The writers must have realised that overexploiting the banana theme was a sure way to make the strip boring and repetitive, so they spiced it up by giving the theme an occasional weird twist (such as a visit to a psychologist for an intelligence test, or joining Bananas Anonymous to cure Kid's banana addiction), or changing the setting (such as a trip to London or an expedition to the Himalayas to visit Kid's cousin – Abominable Snowman).

Kid Kong was obviously intended as a big, if not the biggest, star of MONSTER FUN COMIC. The strip usually occupied two pages (with the odd three-pager thrown in). During the relatively short seventy-three issue run of MONSTER FUN COMIC, Kid made seven front cover appearances and got two pull-out colour posters. Nearly all of the episodes were illustrated by Robert Nixon, barring a few by Les Barton and Jim Watson.

'Kid Kong' survived the merger with BUSTER in 1976, and continued for another five years until the 30th of January, 1982 – the last issue before BUSTER absorbed JACKPOT. The new artist was Rob Lee, who imitated Robert Nixon's style rather well.

Although Kid did get a few front covers of the combined comic, the feature became less prominent and most of the episodes were only one page long. In March 1981 the editor decided to give the strip a boost by giving it two full pages. Kid's promotion was marked with an episode which re-visited his origins: in the issue cover dated 21st March, 1981, a curious fan phoned Granny Smith and demanded to know how Kid came to be living with her in the first place. Kid eagerly re-told the tale of his escape from the travelling fair, making it the third time that the story of Kid's origins was presented to fans.

'Kid Kong' continued to appear in MONSTER FUN and BUSTER annuals and holiday specials well into the 80s. Some of the non-reprint stories were drawn by the strip's regular artists Robert Nixon and Rob Lee, who were occasionally substituted by other top-class cartoonists such as Frank McDiarmid, Tom Williams and Ian Knox.

Author: Thomas Sargent | **Twitter:** @nousrembobinons

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FLINTLOCK CONTINUES FROM ISSUE 11.

NNGG
YOU GOING TO *SHOOT ME*, EH? WITH A PISTOL THAT WE BOTH KNOW *ISN'T LOADED*?
YOU *SHOULDN'T* HAVE RUN, BOY.
THAT MEANS YOU *DON'T* TRUST ME, AND THAT NEEDS *ADDRESSING*...

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THE HIGHWAYMAN!
WHAT'S THIS? SOME KIND OF A SET UP?
IT'S NO SET UP. THIS IS MY PATCH AND I'M DISTEMPERED BY YOU TAKING ADVANTAGE OF IT, WHOEVER YOU ARE.
SO IT'S AN INTRODUCTION YOU WANT, EH? LET'S JUST SAY I'M AN OPPORTUNIST, PASSING THROUGH, SO I'LL BE ON MY WAY IF IT CAUSES UMBRAGE.
YOU DO THAT - BUT FIRST I WANT WHATEVER WAS LIFTED FROM THAT LONDON COACH.
THE BAG'S THERE. HELP YOURSELF.
NO, I THINK IT BEST FOR YOU TO DO THE NECESSARY, UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES.
AS YOU LIKE IT...
... CATCH!

AAGH
THIS ONE MAKES FOR *FINE PROTECTION*, EH?
THAT *PISTOL* YOU'RE HOLDING – THROW IT OVER! *NOW!*

HERE, BUT DON'T HURT HIM, HE'S ONLY A BOY!
PLEASE...
TAKE HIM, I'VE GOT WHAT I WANT!
GET YOURSELF AWAY FROM HERE, BOY!
ON YOUR HEELS AND DON'T LOOK BACK!
SO HERE WE ARE, THEN. NO FINAL WORDS, EH?

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WHAT IS IT, MAN? I NEED TO BE BACK IN NEVISON BEFORE DARK.
SIR, *HIS HONOUR* SENT ME, REGARDING YOUR *RECENT CONSULTATION*. HE SAYS MATTERS HAVE BEEN DISCUSSED AS APPROPRIATE AND TO PASS YOU THIS.
WHAT IS IT? A JEWELRY BOX?
I DON'T RIGHTLY KNOW, BUT THE MESSAGE WAS TO DELIVER IT *URGENT*. WHICH I HAVE.
SIR.
HMF...
...WHAT IN GOD'S NAME AM I SUPPOSED TO DO WITH THIS?
TO BE CONTINUED...
End of Book 2

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THE STATE OF INDEPENDENTS

The UK's independent and small press comics scene has never been more exciting. We bring you a look at some of the best!

"This year's 'Troobs' was all about positivity towards comics"

Alex Thomas looks back at the **True Believers Comic Festival 2020**

We usually begin our annual True Believers Comic Festival show report with a grumble about the weather. However for one glorious weekend this February, the heavens shone on the geeks of the south west and we were able to make our journey to Cheltenham without having to battle snow or rain storms!

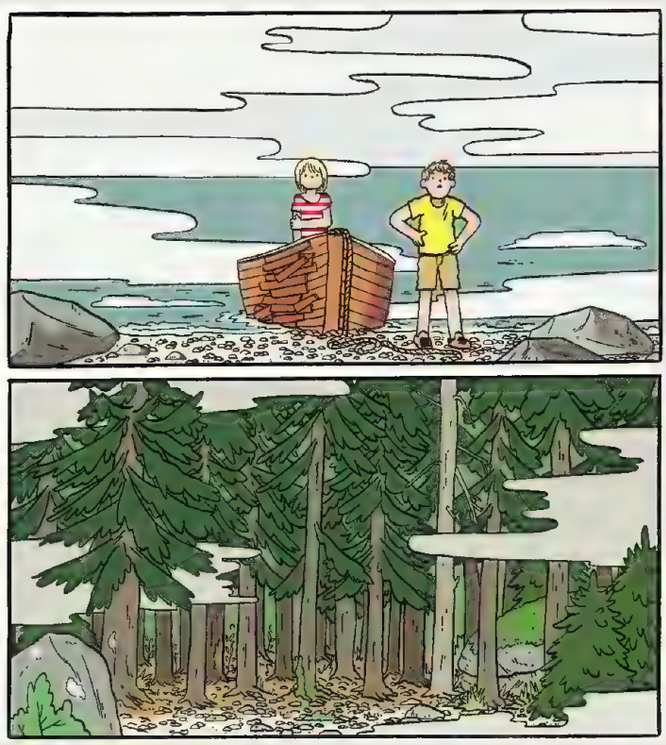
The traditional curtain raiser of the UK convention season, True Believers (aka Troobs) is now in its second year at Cheltenham's Jury's Inn. It's a fantastic venue for a convention as it has that old school vibe to it. The venue allows for the comics area and cosplay to be split, meaning the comics hall isn't filled with selfie taking teens and the cosplayers aren't constantly being glared at by disgruntled small pressers for blocking their tables. The two flow from one to the other, and with the event taking over the whole of the ground floor of the hotel it means everything is nicely spread out, without areas getting lost (as happened at the old race course venue). You also get the experience of seeing a bunch of League Two footballers or hung over hen partiers attempting to negotiate the convention floor while checking out!

True Believers has always been an incredibly small press friendly event and this year it was perhaps even more so. With the 'big name guests' just being regulars Mike Collins, Dylan Teague and The Beano's Laura Howell it was time for the indie scene to shine. There was a host of familiar faces exhibiting including: indie comic of the year winner Gustaffo Vargas showcasing with MANU; Matt Hardy and Russell Olson with their new all ages gender flipped take on Sherlock Holmes – A Study in Scarlet; NPC Tea's Sarah Millman who had just launched the Kickstarter for a new collected volume; and for the first time in ages the team from Big Punch Studios, with their continued plans for world domination, including revamped Sandwich Masters, plus more Afterlife Inc and Cat and Meringue comics.

Also on the day we caught up with John Tucker (The King), Gav and Emily Mitchell (Rum Row, Brain Shoodles), Nick Bryan (Catalyst), Samuel George London (Project Hoax), Dave West (Accent UK), Pete Taylor (The Seven Sagas of Silverbeard), Dan Harris (The Cosplayer That Doomed The Earth), Dan Butcher (Vanguard), Vince Hunt (Awesome Comics) and Rich Carrington (Mahoney's) and more!

While this year's show was a bit quieter than previous events, this was still a fantastic comics focused day out. While we could complain about the fact there weren't many really big name guests, and some tables said they had a relatively quiet day, the overall sense of this year's Troobs was of positivity towards comics. Everyone was in fantastic spirits and were looking forward to checking out new books from their peers.

If every comic convention was run like this, then UK comic scene would be in very fine health indeed, as we could not ask for a better comics based day!



Max de Radigués' castaway siblings find themselves faced with the very real threat of an island full of wolves!

Stig and Tilde: Leader of the Pack

Publisher: Nobrow Press
Writer/Artist: *Max de Radigués'*
Price: £9.99 from nobrow.net

The second volume of Max de Radigués' Stig and Tilde tales sees a pair teenage castaways landing on a fresh island and looking to fight off a pack of hungry wolves in order to survive and make it bakc home.

The world of Stig and Tilde is one that can only really exist in a work of fiction. These plucky teens are sent off by their parents for a 'kulku' – a traditional rite of passage that sees the youngsters required to spend a bit of time being self sufficient in the wilderness. In the modern world, this would never happen due to parental neuroticism and health and safety, yet in the nostalgic/idealised world of de Radigués' story it all makes perfect sense to let kids go off in a boat alone for weeks or months at a time!

While you are required to make a bit of a leap of faith as a reader, what it does allow, is room for de Radigués to tell his coming of age story a sthe twins fend for themselves on various islands. There is enough peril that you want them to survive and return home as quickly as possible, but there is not so much tragedy that it bogs down the story and makes it maudlin or too angsty. After successfully evading the attentions of 'lunatic poltergeist' Arne in volume 1 (Vanisher's Island), they have repaired their broken boat and manage to limp on to the next island where they are set upon by some wolves and meet an enigmatic hermit.

This is one of those series that is utterly charming and completely absorbing in every respect. The story is gloriously told, meandering from one exploit to the other, while at the same time referring back to previous events and slowly building up the back story. It's also not afraid to give the story some edge, with the wolves in particular being a very real threat and not a cutesy diversion.

"The idealised and nostalgic world of Stig and Tilde is one that can only exist in a work of fiction"

As you would expect with a Nobrow book it looks splendid. De Radigués' style has the polish of a classic bande desinée, but the cartoon-ish qualities of Hamish Steele's Deadendia. The locations are beautifully rendered, while his figure work is classical, yet packed with personality and has a beautifully muted colour scheme.

If you love the Hilda books and can't wait for the next volume, this is a more than capable stop gap. Like a Franco Belgian Lumberjanes mixed with a classic kids adventure like Swallows and Amazons, but with a generous dose of Scandi chic, this is an utterly sublime book that will make you want to head our on your own adventure!

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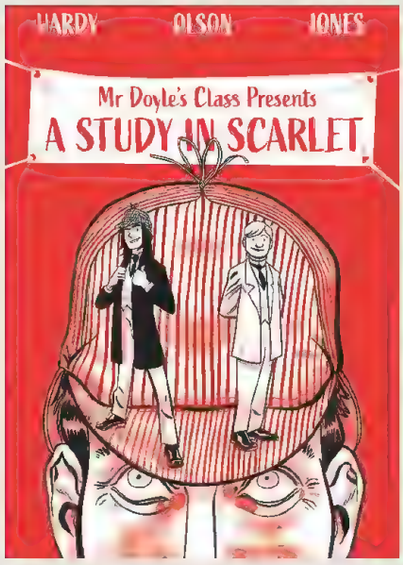
Mr Doyle's Class Presents A Study in Scarlet

Publisher: Portsmouth City Council
Writer: Matt Hardy
Artist: Russell Mark Olson, Rob Jones
Price: £13 from www.visitportsmouth.co.uk/conandoyle/social-media/shop

One of our most eagerly anticipated comics for 2020, Mr Doyle's Class Presents A Study in Scarlet sees Matt Hardy (Murder Most Mundane) team up with Russell Mark Olson (Gateway City) to bring us a unique all ages take on the first Sherlock Holmes story.

A Study in Scarlet cleverly re-imagines this classic mystery as a school play. The roles are taken on by the students (including a young girl taking in the main part – much to the chagrin of her peers) with their teacher Mr Doyle over-seeing the action.

While an obvious choice in terms of the sequence of Holmes stories, it's not the most immediate of reads, as Doyle had not yet established the conventions of his hero at this point. However, Hardy and Olson tweak and amend the structure of the story to make the whole thing much more familliar. The concept is your classic closed room murder with Holmes dissecting the clues around him. Hardy and Olson stick faithfully to the plot of the original, if not the structure, and it's better for it.In a lot of ways the adaptation is treated like an analysis of the story as much as it is a re-telling. While this helps make sense of this story, it is not the most



instant of reads – especially if you are expecting it to be a conventional crime procedural. However, if you're not a Holmes devotee, we found a quick read of Wikipedia helped get us up to speed and suddenly it all fell into place.

One thing we were always sure about was how it looks – which is absolutely incredible. As huge fans of Russell's work on Gateway City, we knew this would be a perfect fit and his work doesn't disappoint. The way he goes from Victorian inspired street scenes to the school play to the flashbacks is exquisite. His characterisation gives every page an energy and a vibrancy that really captures the enthusiasm of the kids, yet he manages to also capture the gravitas of the more serious moments. It has a very European feel to it, with bags of energy and exuberance and that mix of cartooning and realism create a very stylised piece.

This is an outstanding piece of work that deserves to be on shelves in comic and book shops alike. It adapts the story in a really smart and informed way and by the end of reading it you feel entertained and educated in equal measures. Case solved!

Finger Guns

Publisher: Vault Comics
Writer: Justin Richards
Artist: Val Halvorson, Rebecca Nalty (Colours), Taylor Esposito (Lettering)
Price: £2.49 from ComiXology

Vault Comics continue their fine form of 2019, with this tale of a pair of high school kids who develop powers that they exhibit by pointing their fingers at people (i.e. making 'finger guns').

While the concept may seem tenuous, this first issue is a lot of fun. Richards and Halvorsen build a story which has elements of classic superhero origins, and teen angst, but deliver it in a packaged that is packed full of delicious self awareness that reminded us of the excellent Sex Criminals, but less x-rated! They turn what could be a one note joke into a really well told and constructed story – with plenty of room for development and enough character depth to make it plausible.

It's helped by some exquisite artwork from Halvorson which has a cartoon-ish quality mixed with a very contemporary sense of design and style, including some lush colours from Rebecca Nalty.

This is one of those books which, based on it's initial premise shouldn't work – but it somehow does!

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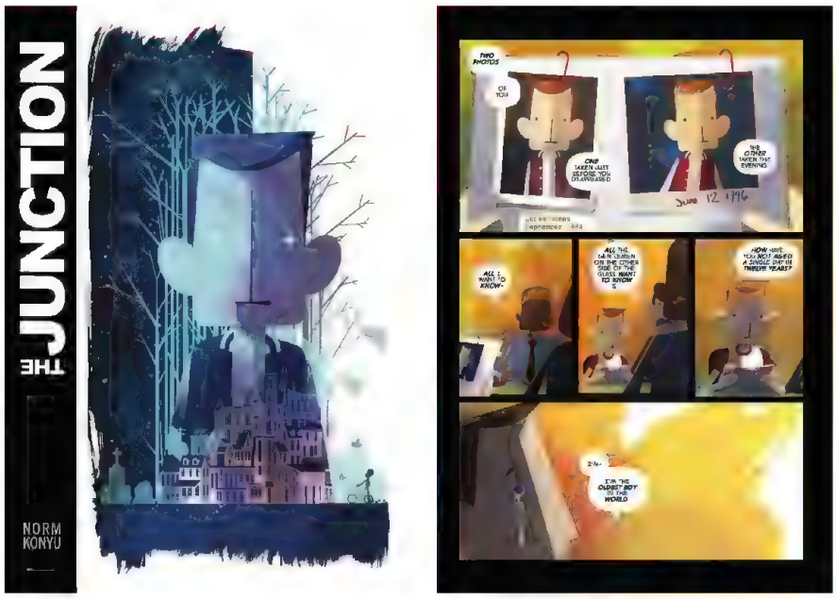
"Emotions drive stories... whether the emotion is grief, fear, love, or anger."

Norm Konyu explains his debut graphic novel **The Junction**

A boy goes missing and returns home 12 years later, having not aged. This strange concept is the heart of Norm Konyu's The Junction, which is currently funding on Kickstarter. We caught up with Norm to find out more about the inspiration for the book and also some of the hidden meaning within the world of Kirby Junction!



The small town world of the Junction is based on Norm's upbringing in southern Canada

Can you tell us a bit about where the initial idea for the story came from and how it has evolved over time?
Norm Konyu: You know, I can't really pin down when the story became what it is. I do know that some of the sequences came from dreams, specifically one where I was trying to get out of an autumnal forest but the trees wouldn't let me. The story kept altering even after I was well into the artwork stage. Not very professional, or the best use of my time, but I managed to flounder my way to a cohesive story in the end.

Kirby Junction feels like a classic American Small Town, was it intended to be such an idealised version?
NK: I grew up in Canada, in a very small town in Southern Ontario. Maybe the word town is too grand a term. Cows outnumbered residents two to one. There are dozens of these sorts of towns across Ontario, little islands in farmland, but many of them don't really exist in the same shape or form anymore. I feel a lot of these places have lost their individuality in the process, and I think that's what I was harking back to with Kirby Junction – a town of the past viewed through the distorting lens of nostalgia.

The story deals with ideas of grief and loss? Who do you think the book is aimed at?
NK: I've discussed the age range with a few people. There's none of the usual age restrictors in it: sex, swearing, or gore; but it does have some 'grown-up' themes. Definitely fine for any 12 year old, but for those younger, it depends on their maturity. The emotional story is certainly important. It's important to any story, whether the emotion is grief, fear, love, or anger. Emotions drive stories.

If you could reveal one secret or about The Junction, which people should look out for, but which doesn't spoil the story, what would that be?
NK: The town is named Kirby Junction for two reasons. The first is that my favourite childhood comics were from the mind and pencil of the brilliant Jack Kirby. The second is a bit more subtle, but if people look carefully, they just may see the reason...

The Junction is currently funding on Kickstarter and you can find out more about The Junction at junctiongraphicnovel.com

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Her Prosperity

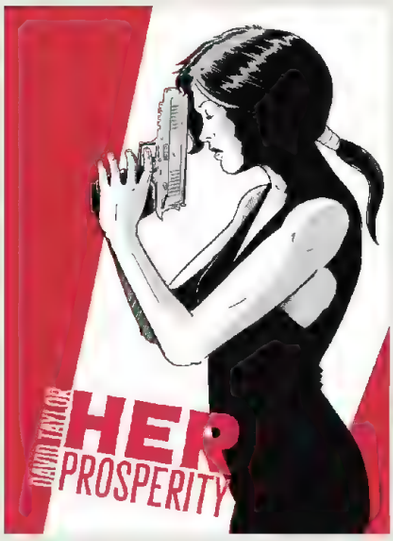
Publisher: David Taylor
Writer/Artist: David Taylor
Price: £4 from dftaylor.bigcartel.com

This is your classic revenge thriller in the reign of Death Wish or Taken, however writer/artist David Taylor adds a nice angle to this well worn format by having a female lead.

He does this without it feeling like tokenism and the titular 'Her' is a classic enigmatic investigator, who mixes strength and vulnerability well, and sets out to find a missing girl in the sleazy town of Prosperity where 'rich men go to relax from the pressures of their privilege'.

Taylor builds a smart, but unfussy story that builds slowly, revealing character bit by bit before exploding into action packed moments. It has a crime noir esque first person narrative, while the action makes it more like a 70s grindhouse movie.

If you love crime comics like Criminal or Dying Is Easy, then this is a fantastic read. It's strengths are in it's uncomplicated nature which makes it a very readable. With potential for continuing the story in other towns (it reminded us of nomadic heroes like Jack Reacher) this feels like a character and concept with plenty of miles left in the tank!



Rum Row #3

Publisher: Grenade Fight Ink
Writer: Andrew Maxwell
Artist: Gavin Mitchell, Adam Pruett
Price: £1.49 from ComiXology

Andrew Maxwell's tale of prohibition speakeasies based in airships is a book that has been under appreciate due to the length of time between issues. However with new artist Gav Mitchell (Trolltooth Wars) joining then team we're hoping this is the start of a new frequency to this excellent series.

Rum Row takes the classic conventions of prohibtion-era pulp comics and transposes them to the skies, with speakeasies now in airships above the New York streets. In amongst this motley bunch of thieves and villains we meet The Captain Anne Blanchard, a female club owner who is attempting to sell plans to the NYPD's top secret Albatross to the highest bidder. all the while being pursued by Jack Tinson and the NYPD.

Issue #3 starts with a bang as Tinson and his partner are being thrown from a plane and the action doesn't let up from there. As the story builds towards the Black Auction of the Albatross plans everyone is looking to out manoeuvre each other in a classic game of cat and mouse.

Rum Row is one of those books which takes a familiar concept and gives it just enough of a tweak to make it into a truly unique idea. With this original airborne world in place, it allows Maxwell to explore a myriad of ideas within it as he has created an incredibly rich and fertile world to grow stories within.

The roster of characters that Maxwell has assembled are a superb bunch, from dastardly Oriental drug lords to mechanical Nazis and he could not have picked a better artist to bring them to life than Mitchell. Gav has taken on the reigns of Rum Row from Michele Bandini, who is off working for Marvel. He does a super job of matching Michele's polished style, but at the same time brings his own sense of character to the piece. Instead of having a slightly Oriental/Manga style to it, Gav brings a more European almost Band Dessinee feel to it (reminding us a lot of Atom Agency in places). Meanwhile his ability to mix line work and colour seamlessly (by virtue of him doing it all) gives the book a really coherent feel. It certainly allows him to bring texture and depths to scenes in a way which might not have happened with a colourist or inker who was not used to his work.

With only one issue remaining on the Black Auction plot, this is the perfect change of pace and artist needed to get this book over the line. Thanks to a strong world, a fun plot and some truly stunning artwork, Rum Row is a book which really is heading into the stratosphere!

The King

Publisher: John Tucker
Writer/Artist: John Tucker
Price: £3 at johntucker.bigcartel.com

John Tucker's new book The King does it's best to defy description with a story about a woman who inherits a giant egg from her sister. And that's all we can tell you as John has asked us not to reveal what is in the egg. But suffice to say, you'll never figure it out!

The contents of the egg take the characters on a strange and unique journey which is as bonkers as it is brilliant. The unique concept allows Tucker to create a delightfully strange world which mixes remarkably original ideas and wonderful visuals.

John tells the whole story like a children's picture book, with beautifully type set pages and a vintage hue generated by an orangey watercolour wash colour scheme, which feels like a faded Ladybird book. It perfectly compliments this nostalgic and reflective story, but also allows John to be experimental with the content as it feels like it is set in a very childlike world, where grown up restrictions no longer apply.

It's difficult to talk about The King without giving too much away, but believe us when we say it is a wonderful read, packed full of originality that is truly one of a kind.

Vanguard Volume 3

Publisher: Dan Butcher
Write/Artist: Dan Butcher
Price: £16 from www.comichaus.com

Dan Butcher's superhero webcomic Vanguard is one of the best post-modern capes comics you'll find in the UK.

Volume 3 picks up after the bloodthirsty battle that saw the original Vanguard destroyed and this new volume sees the story move forward several years to a more dystopian world where corruption and greed has been allowed to develop unchecked.

It's perfect territory for a new generation of Vanguard heroes to develop within and that is the thrust of this new volume, with much of the story built around the arrival of new hero Wolfshead. After the fairly trad superhero fare of the first volume and a half, this hits much darker territory with a book which feels much more like The Authority than The British Avengers. It has a muscular and macho approach to story telling, feeling more like a gritty action movie than a complex morality play as Dan mixes dark cyberpunk satire with violent action, and also a Celtic supernatural undercurrent to create a brilliant mix of styles. His artwork is smart and slick and perfectly suits the world he has created. While volume 3 is not always an ideal jumping on point for new readers, the way this part of the story reboots itself is a great place to begin (and then work back) as this is a series that is still on an upward trajectory to even greater heights!

Lad: The Homecoming

Publisher: Umar Ditta
Writer: Umar Ditta, Hugo Boylan (Editor)
Artist: Carlos Pedro, Kerrie Smith, Dearbhla Kelly
Price: £4 from UmarDItta.com

This is the kind of foul mouthed and sweary comic your mother warned you about. Yet it has a really dark charm that draws you in and takes you along for the ride.

'Lad' is part of 'The Family' – a kitchen sink mafia group whose patriarch, 'Dad', is found badly beaten in the forest. The family instantly go after the enigmatic Hermit, a recluse who lives in the woods, with whom they have a fragile truce base on fear and respect. However with the Uncles taking charge of things then the rules may be about to change.

On the surface Lad is your average gangster revenge thriller that we have seen in everything from the Godfather to Goodfellas, however it has a British council estate setting which gives it a freshness without turning into a Guy Ritchie-esque Mockney parody. There's also as a supernatural element thanks to the enigmatic Hermit which further separates it from the crowd.

When all these disparate elements are combined thanks to a very well considered and explained back story, and some fantastic monochrome artwork from Portuguese artist Carlos Pedro, it manages to create a really fresh and edgy crime drama. While the artwork and language can be quite raw and rough around the edges at times, it is a better book as a result of that.

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2000AD FANZINES

2000AD graced the shelves of UK newsagents in February 1977, at a time when the UK was gripped by the fashion and music phenomenon known as punk. Like the punk rock enthusiasts, 2000AD didn't play by the normal rules. There was a rabid fan base, and as a result some of the more creative ones would create their own comic strips based on their favourite characters. Those who were a bit more organized even made entire magazines dedicated to 2000AD, that were scribbled by amateurs and photocopied at someone's Dad's work behind the bosses back. Whilst punk and it's fanzines died out long ago, 2000AD still stands strong, and still inspires many talented artists, writers and editors to pay homage in the only way they know how.

The interesting thing about dedicated fanzines is the fact that you're playing in somebody else's sandbox. After all, Judge Dredd is the property of 2000AD owners Rebellion, who are known to be very protective of their characters. One can imagine the ire of a writer who sees their beloved creation manhandled by some jumped up fanzine wannabe, but Dredd/Strontium Dog creator John Wagner is cool with it. 'I'm happy for fans to use my characters as long as it's in non-profit fanzines,' he says. 'I read some now and then – some of the stories are actually quite good. I'm particularly impressed by Zarjaz and Dogbreath. It's a good place for budding pro artists to cut their teeth.'

Original editor of Zarjaz Andrew Lewis recalls that not all creators were so amiable about their characters being played with. 'We had been warned off using characters created by Grant Morrison and Alan Moore,' he said, 'but nobody had advised us against using Pat (Mills)'s creations. The first issue included Slaine and Torquemada, and I received a letter from Pat explaining his disatisfaction with this. He was extremely polite and very complimentary about ZARJAZ and completely understood our motives for creating it. However he requested that we didn't use any of his characters and pointed out that we should really have been advised of this already. Naturally I apologised and the whole thing was resolved very amicably with Pat wishing us well. It did mean scrapping some stories already written for issue 2, including a Termight based script completed by Si Spurrier which I still have a copy of, though I'm sure he's long forgotten about it now.'

Ah, yes... Zarjaz and it's sister publication Dogbreath. These two fanzines are the backbone of the UK 2000AD fan scene, appearing a few times a year and featuring some, quite frankly, amazing work from non professional writers and artists. Whilst Zarjaz is happy to take a scattergun approach when it comes to characters, Dogbreath draws exclusively from the well of the aforementioned Strontium Dog universe. Commissioning Editor, letterer and general flag waver for these publications is Dave Evans, aka Bolt-01 and is the go to guy to ask about 2000AD fanzines. We asked him how he got into it in the first place.

'I've drawn for pretty much my entire life. In the late 1980's I produced a series of self published comics that I shopped around for a year or so. Then in the early 2000's I got a computer and discovered the early 2000 AD forum, which even contained fan comics! I wrote and drew some strips featuring a Strontium Dog (Whistler) that I eventually collected and Dr Bob (original Dogbreath editor) agreed to let me put them out as a Dogbreath special. After that I was hooked and have been here ever since. These days my role as editor and letterer takes up so much time that these days I rarely get to draw.'

I asked Dave what made him want to write his own stories. '2000 AD is, in my opinion, the finest comic being published,' he replied. 'The opportunities for stories in the worlds created for Tharg are as varied as the worlds themselves. They make an excellent playground for a fan to explore and in doing so learn to tell the types of stories that readers of 2000 AD want.' Richmond Clements, who also edits and writes for both publications, is in full agreement. 'Cliché as it is, it really is the Galaxy's

Greatest Comic. Who wouldn't want to play in that sandbox?'

Both men are happy with the fact that Rebellion pretty much leave them alone, trusting them not to be dicks, but they stress that anyone thinking of doing a similar publication should 100% get full permission first. 'They own the property, after all,' states Richmond. 'It's an astounding privilege to be allowed to play with these characters... can you imagine DC allowing fans to put out their own Batman comics? It'd never happen.'

1980s/1990s 2000AD editor Richard Burton (not that one) recalls that in his time he came across fanzines but rarely had any reason to intervene. 'Only one spectacularly crossed the line by reprinting some of Simon Bisley's work and claiming credit as their own,' he recalls. 'We had to issue a cease and desist order to stop them. Overall we were happy with the fan activities we saw – as long as they weren't expecting us to supply material and information to them.'

As with Tharg in 2000AD, the fanzines have their own mysterious editors, and in Dogbreath it's Dr Bob, a bearded lady who goes by the real name of Amanda Kear, and she was in the 'zine game even before Dave and Richmond as the original Dogbreath editor. 'I'd been involved with science fiction fandom and their fanzines since I was at school. In the mid 90s I had a "Doh!" moment and realised I could combine these 2 interests to produce a Strontium Dog fanzine.'

Although the fanzines are very careful not to make a profit (this is one of Rebellion's caveats), it's still a rewarding endeavour. 'People saying they'd enjoyed it and demanding to know when the next one was coming out,' said Amanda when I ask what she loved about her time. 'Alan Grant and John Wagner giving me contact details so I could post them copies. Fan artists and writers wanting to contribute.'

Dave Evans is in agreement over the contributors. 'There are so many wonderful things' he said. 'From seeing writers and artists make the transition from fan to droid, to seeing all the amazing scripts and artwork as it arrives to collecting the latest issues from the printer. It really is a labour of love.' Indeed, it's pertinent that the fanzines have seen more than a few future 2000AD contributors come through the ranks. Amanda is happy to reel of a few names: 'Rufus, PJ Holden, Al Ewing, Gary Wilkinson,Gary Simpson'. ' I'm wary to throw names around,' says Evans modestly, 'but they include: Mike Carroll, Karl Stock, Conor Boyle, Dan Cornwell, Paul Williams, Neil Roberts and I'm sure I've missed some.'

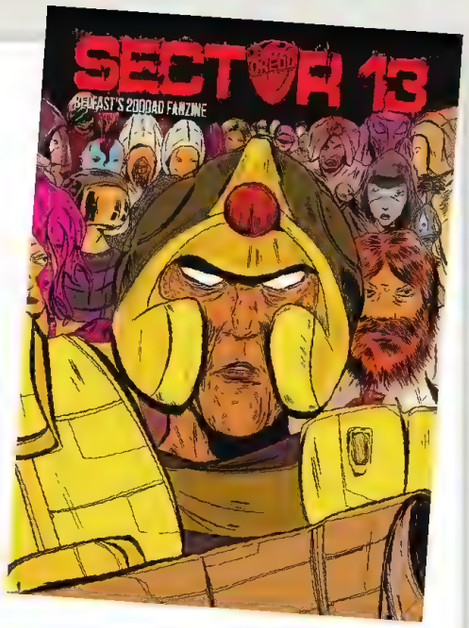
As well as bringing new writers into the world of publication, the fanzines often sport gorgeous covers from current 2000AD artists, with the superb Colin MacNeil cover on the current issue of Dogbreath being a fine example. Dave is modest when asked how he manages this on a limited budget. 'The wonderful art droids at Thargs disposal will very often just agree as part of a conversation,' he confesses. 'I've been turned down of course, but more often than not they say yes. As for the limited budget – I've found that offering to provide funds for tea and biscuits to be a wonderful help.'

Entering Sector 13

Finally, we turn to the new kid on the 2000AD fanzine block, Belfast based Sector13. Started by the popular fan group of the same name, the fanzine sets itself apart by being A4 to Zarjaz's A5, and also in full colour using quality paper stock. What immediately stands out inside is the opening Judges photo story, featuring dedicated cosplayers, that is surprisingly good. Editor Peter Duncan explains: 'They started as a way of getting as many of the Dredd cosplayers from our group involved in the zine, but have now developed into something more. We're developing the characters of the cosplayer Judges and featuring them in other stories.'

Sector 13 has also steered away from using 2000AD main characters as much as possible, and instead set their stories in the worlds the main characters inhabit. 'In the future we'll only be looking for strips set in the worlds of 2000 AD (or beyond) rather than featuring Dredd or Johnny Alpha or Rogue Trooper.' confirmed Peter. Much like other fanzines it's a labour of love rather than profit. 'Money from sales is used solely to fund the printing of the next issue, and the occasional reprint of past issues when we run out of copies. We're very strict about that. Nobody gets paid, nobody claims expenses. We do this because we love doing it.'

"It really is the Galaxy's Greatest Comic. Who wouldn't want to play in that sandbox?"



Having read the issues so far, we can highly recommend the mag, which Peter agrees has improved over time. 'It's got bigger for one thing,' he said. 'Last couple of issues have been 44 pages, which is a sweet spot for pages vs. cost. Also we think we're able to fill the pages with great quality material. We've built up a talented set of writers and artists who want to work with us and we can see development in the quality of their contributions issue by issue. I think we've also become more adventurous. Looking at different storytelling techniques and trying new things, like linking stories and developing the characters of the Judges in our photo-story.'

So there you have it, a small look into the world of 2000AD fanzines. we recommend all three as a damned good read, and you never know – maybe you'll be one of the future writers, artists or even editors, but if it's the last don't forget to as Tharg first!

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Continued from Issue 11

"SEVERAL CYCLES AGO, USING AN ARMADA OF DIMENSION JUMPING STARSHIPS AND AN ARMY OF HIS DREADED SPACE TURTLE MARINES, HE TRIED TO INVADE EARTH."
"THE BATTLE WAS FIERCE, BUT WE NEVER GAVE UP. IN THE END HE WAS DEFEATED BY THE MIGHTY FISTS OF JUSTICE!"
POW!
"BUT BEFORE WE COULD TAKE HIM IN, SKELETRON FELL THROUGH AN INTER-DIMENSIONAL RIFT CREATED BY ONE OF HIS VESSELS. NEVER TO BE SEEN AGAIN.
OR SO WE THOUGHT. "

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HOLY HALLEY'S COMET!!
HE MUST'VE FALLEN INTO GLOBULUS' HOME DIMENSION.
WE CAN'T LET THIS THING SPREAD TO OTHER WORLDS, CAPTAIN.
WE'RE WORKING TO BOOST POWER TO OUR DELTA RAY CANNON.
WITH YOUR COSMIC POWER, WE COULD FINISH IT QUICKLY.
I WON'T DESTROY THIS BEING UNLESS WE ABSOLUTELY HAVE TO.
WE HAVE TO FIND WHERE SKELETRON'S BASE OF OPERATION IS
THE MAJORITY OF THE PEOPLE WHO'VE BEEN TAKEN OVER HAVE BEEN GATHERING AT THE CAPITAL HALL.
THEN THAT HAS TO BE WHERE SKELETRON IS!
KID COSMIC AND I WILL TAKE THE LEAD ON THIS WHILE YOU ALL STAY HERE AND WORK ON YOUR DELTA RAY.
I DON'T LIKE IT, BUT IF WE FAIL, IT MAYBE OUR GALAXY'S ONLY HOPE.
13

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MEANWHILE, AT CAPITAL HALL...
...A DASTARDLY FIGURE MARVELS AT HIS OWN GENIUS.
IT WAS ALMOST TOO EASY. TARGETING A WORLD AT THE EDGE OF COMMONWEALTH SPACE. AND NOW, IT IS MINE.
OH THE JOY OF IT! NOTHING CAN STOP ME FROM TAKING MY RIGHTFUL PLACE AS MASTER OF THE GALAXY!!
AND IT'S ALL THANKS TO MY GULLIBLE NEW FRIEND.
IF THIS IS HOW YOU TREAT A NEW FRIEND, SKELETRON...
14

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...I'D HATE TO SEE HOW YOU'D TREAT A COUPLE OF OLD ONES.
AH, IF IT ISN'T THE COSMICS.
YOU WERE FOOLS FOR COMING HERE. NOW YOU BOTH WILL JOIN MY LEGION OF FOLLOWERS.
GLOBULUS, BRING OUR GUESTS INTO THE UNITY!!
HERE THEY COME, KID. YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO AND STAY SAFE!
YES, SIR!
15

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SORRY, FELLAS...
...BUT I'M READY FOR YOU THIS TIME.
CRASH!!
YOUR MENACE STOPS HERE, SKELETRON. THIS TIME, FOR GOOD!
KRAKKLE
MY DEAR CAPTAIN, I'VE LEARNT FROM OUR LAST ENCOUNTER. THIS TIME I INTEND ON MAKING...
FZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ
WHUP!
...A BIGGER STATEMENT!
16

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BY THE STARS! WE MUST BE INSIDE MY MIND.
CORRECT, CAPTAIN COSMIC, YOU BECOMING PART OF THE UNITY.
URGHH! GLOBULUS, YOU MUST LISTEN TO ME. SKELETRON IS USING YOU FOR HIS OWN PLANS!
NO! SKELETRON IS GLOBULUS' FRIEND. TAUGHT GLOBULUS. GAVE GLOBULUS PURPOSE.
YOU ONLY THINK THAT BECAUSE HIS WAS THE FIRST MIND YOU TOUCHED.
NOW YOU JUST ABSORB MINDS WITHOUT TRULY HEARING THEM.
YOU CAN DO MORE THAN CONQUER AND HURT PEOPLE.

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GLOBULUS
HURT, NO CONQUER!
THIS _ YOU LIE
YOU'RE A VICTIM HERE TOO. READ MY THOUGHTS, SEE MY MEMORIES.
THEN YOU WILL KNOW
VERY WELL

Comic Scene Vol2 Issue 13 84 pages 2-9-20.qxp_Layout 1 15/10/2021 15:43 Page 74

MEANWHILE, KID COSMIC'S SITUATION IS DIRE!
(URGH) COSMIC SHIELDS, FAILING!!
HUH?!
GLOBULUS!! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER, THEY'RE MAKING A CHOICE OF THEIR OWN. AND THAT CHOICE IS FREEING EVERYONE...
"...ALL OVER THE PLANET."
20

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IT SEEMS THE UNITY WORKS BOTH WAYS AND OUR FRIEND HERE LEARNT A FEW THINGS.
AND IT TURNS OUT THAT THEY'RE NOT A FAN OF BEING USED TO HURT OTHERS...
...AND THEY'D LIKE A WORD WITH YOU ABOUT THAT.
OH DEAR!
GLOBULUS, MY FRIEND, HE IS ALL YOURS.
STAY BACK OR I'LL BLAST....
MMMM! MMMM!!
21

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THANK YOU, FRIEND COSMIC, YOU HAVE SHOWN US YOUR MIND AND YOUR HEART.
YOU WILL FOREVER BE PART OF OUR UNITY.
I AM HONOURED.
THIS ONE WILL CAUSE NO MORE TROUBLE.
WHERE WILL YOU GO?
WE DO NOT KNOW. OUR HOME DIMENSION IS CLOSED TO US NOW.
MAYBE WE CAN HELP?
22

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THE PEOPLE OF DEVRON VII WOULD BE VERY HAPPY FOR YOU TO STAY HERE WITH US, IF YOU WANT TO.
MAYBE WE CAN HELP YOU FIND A WAY HOME.
BUT [illegible] BROUGHT HARM TO YOU? WHY WOULD YOU HELP?
IT WASN'T YOUR FAULT. YOU WERE A VICTIM OF SKELETRON JUST AS WE WERE.
PLEASE, WE INSIST.
THEN IT'S SETTLED!
23

THANK THE STARS YOU WERE ABLE TO GET THROUGH TO GLOBULUS.
ABSOLUTELY, KID. SOMETIMES IT ISN'T ALWAYS CLEAR IF SOMEONE'S TRYING TO HELP YOU OR REALLY TRYING TO HURT YOU.
WE MUST ALWAYS BE VIGILANT.
HOW LOVELY THAT THE PEOPLE OF DEVRON VII WERE WILLING TO HELP GLOBULUS.
COMPASSION, KID. IT'S A POWERFUL TOOL IN THE FIGHT FOR JUSTICE!
SAY, LET'S SEE WHO CAN MAKE IT BACK TO THE COSMIC CITADEL FIRST?
SILLY, FATHER, YOU KNOW I ALWAYS WIN!
THE END!

Hello there! My name is Samuel George London and every Monday I host Comics For The Apocalypse. A podcast that puts guests into a fictional apocalypse where they then have to choose some comics to take with them.

This month's guest pick is the writer behind Death's Head and Transformers, Simon Furman. If you listen to the episode you'll hear how much of an absolute legend he is but if you don't get round to it, here is a breakdown of our chat.

The apocalypse Simon was put into was a robot uprising, and his action plan for survival is to get the robots on his side by showing them his body of work, especially Transformers. However, as a contingency plan he has an orbital attack ship to help him get out of any sticky situations.

Moving on to Simon's comic choices, the first comic he remembers really enjoying was Smash. He particularly enjoyed Robot Archie, The Spider and The Steel Claw, which is where his real love of comics began.

Simon said that he's not a huge humour comics guy but he does very much enjoy D.R. & Quinch by Alan Moore and Alan Davis.

Switching emotions, Simon finds comic series ending unexpectedly very sad but one that has had a real impact on him as a person and a writer is Batman: The Killing Joke by Alan Moore and Brian Bolland.

Horror doesn't effect Simon much because of being weaned on horror films at a young age but he really appreciates Hellblazer by Jamie Delano and John Ridgway.

Simon loves covers and talks about how he works with artists such as Dave Gibbons but one of his favourite' is The Amazing Spider-Man #8 because it's one of the earliest comics he owned. The cover itself is a multi-scene cover that has the Human Torch, The Living Brain and Flash Thompson all in one.

The most meaningful comic that he repeatedly reads is Alan Moore, Garry Leach and Alan Davis' Miracleman (formerly known as Marvelman), which he finds incredibly inspirational as a writer.

Lastly, Simon thinks that the best comics of all time for him are The Uncanny X-Men #131-#134, which lead up to The Dark Phoenix Saga by Chris Claremont and John Byrne. He particularly enjoyed #132 where Wolverine falls through a few floors of a building and ends up being washed away in a sewer.

If you'd like to listen to this episode of Comics For The Apocalypse or any other episodes with the likes of Heather Antos from Valiant Comics or PJ Holden of Judge Dredd fame then please visit **www.SoundCloud.com/ComicsApocalypse** or simply **search Comics For The Apocalypse** in your podcast app. Finally, feel free to follow me at **www.twitter.com/SamuelGLondon** if you're on Twitter.

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"He particularly enjoyed Robot Archie, The Spider and The Steel Claw, which is **where his real love of comics began.**"

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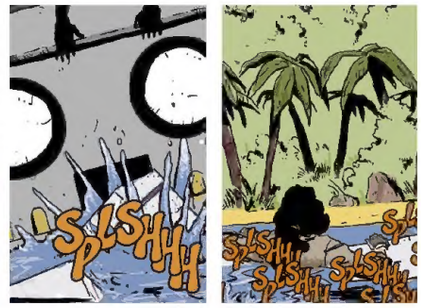
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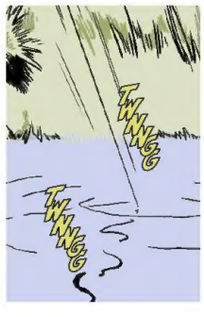
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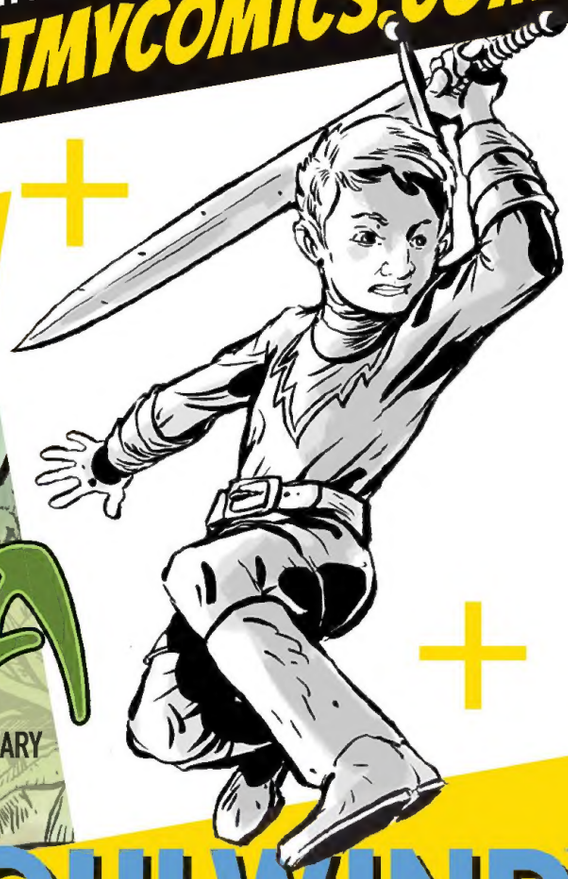

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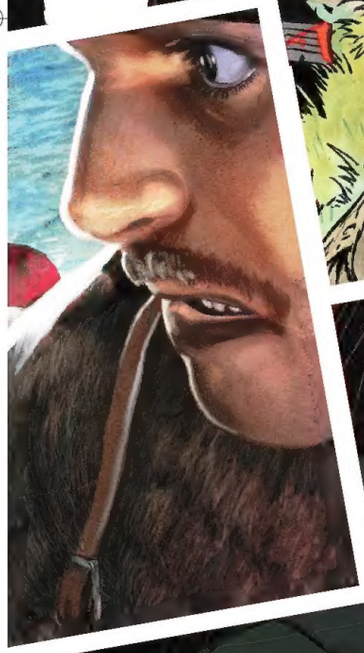

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